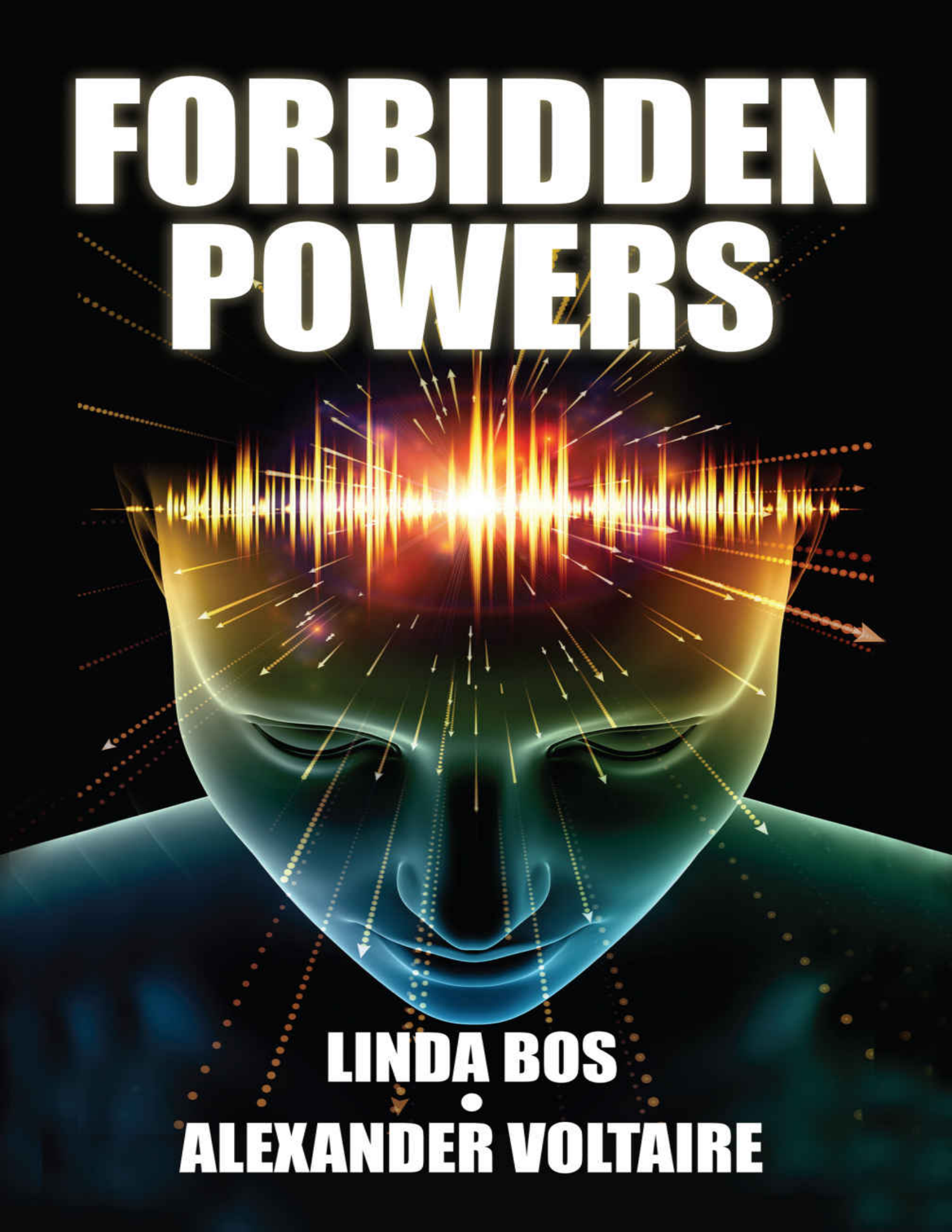
FORBIDDEN POWERS



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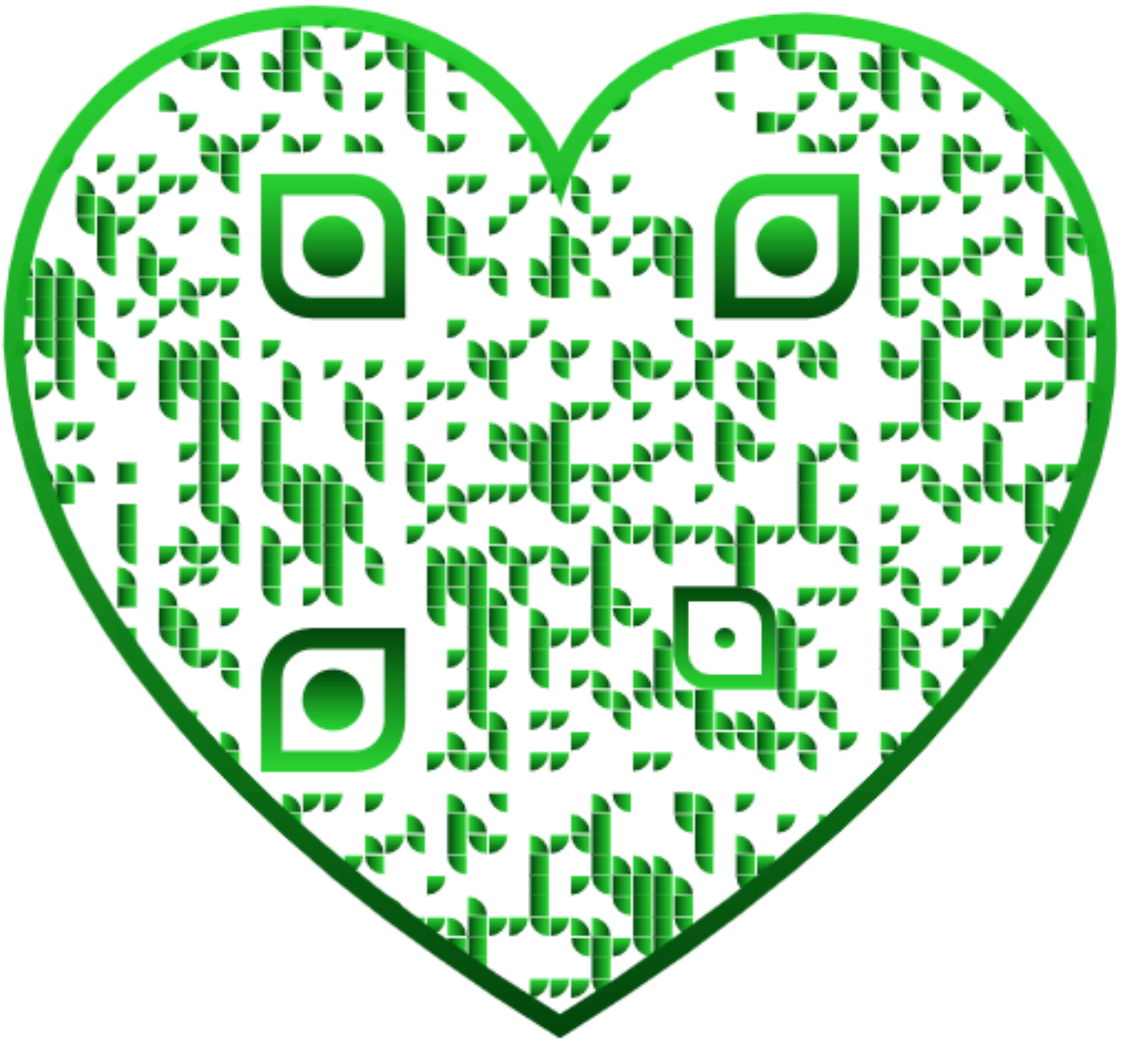

FORBIDDEN POWERS

Why You Should Ignore the Taboo Against ESP & PSI

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I

The Extraordinary Power of Psi*

**Psi: A neutral term for psychic phenomena coined by British psychologist Robert Thouless.*

Introductory Quotations

She told me things no one possibly could know, things on which I have been working, and she demonstrated to me that she has a power to do things I cannot at this time explain… It was miraculous indeed.

—Albert Einstein on psychic Gene Dennis[1]

Yes, I think telepathy exists, and I think quantum physics will help us understand its basic properties.

—Nobel Laureate Brian Josephson[2]

I have no objection to accepting the existence of relatively constant psychic contents that survive [the death of] personal ego.

—Nobel Laureate Wolfgang Pauli

I have never found it possible to dismiss the content of religious thinking as simply part of an outmoded phase in the consciousness of mankind.

—Nobel Laureate Werner Heisenberg[3]

Paranormal phenomena are real.

—Physicist Freeman Dyson[4]

The statistical evidence, at least for telepathy, is overwhelming.

—Computer pioneer Alan Turing[5]

The experimental evidence for ESP from a century of research is so strong and overwhelming that reasonable people should simply no longer doubt its reality.

—Physicist Russell Targ[6]

Examples of Psi in Action

1. Remote viewers working for the CIA locate a kidnapped US general in Italy and a downed Russian bomber in Africa. They describe Soviet weapons factories in remote locations in the USSR and a Chinese nuclear test three days before it occurs.[7]
2. A psychiatrist's daughter's prized harp is stolen in California. The psychiatrist seeks help from an Arkansas-based dowser. Highly skeptical, she complies with the dowser's request to provide him with a map of Oakland, where the instrument was taken. The dowser contacts her two days later with the street address of the missing harp, which is recovered.[8]
3. A scientist dreams of a tower-like building on a campus. Later he is hired as a researcher for a think tank and is surprised to learn that its campus contains a tower that is the spitting image of the one in his dream.[9]
4. A psychic medium in New York locates a woman's missing husband using a piece of cloth torn from his suit. The man is found halfway across the country—exactly where the psychic said he was.[10]
5. Charles Dickens, author of *The Tale of Two Cities*, dreams he is introduced to a woman he hasn't met. In the dream, he hears the woman's name. The next day he meets her, just as he dreamt he would.[11]
6. In 1871 multiple investigators confirm claims made by Scottish psychic Daniel Dunglas Home that he can make objects lighter or heavier at will, and levitate a table without touching it. Dutch skeptics invite Home to Amsterdam, where he repeats the demonstration before a dozen investigators in a well-lit room.[12]
7. Scientists are flummoxed by an 82-year-old Hindu swami's ability to survive without food or water for over two weeks; the man performs

the feat while under constant observation. Another swami demonstrates his ability to stop his heart, lower or raise his body temperature on command, and move an object using his mind.[13]

8. A tai chi master demonstrates “empty force”—the ability to move people without touching them. He also resists the efforts of five people to push him over as he sits on a narrow steel railing without any other visible means of support.[14]
9. Two twins meet after being separated at birth. Although they have lived apart for decades, they realize their lives were filled by coincidences: they both left school at fourteen; they both fell downstairs at fifteen; they both met their husbands at a dance at sixteen; they both married in autumn; they both suffered miscarriages with their first baby; they both subsequently gave birth to two boys followed by a girl; they had both taken ballroom dancing lessons; they both worked for local government; they had both lived in the English village of Silchester; they both had the same favorite author. To top it all off, when they are reunited as adults, they are both wearing the same clothing. [15]
10. Two other twins reunite after decades apart and discover a series of haunting coincidences: both had married a girl called Linda, then divorced and married a girl called Betty; both had called their sons by almost identical names; both owned dogs called Toy; both worked as deputy sheriffs; both worked for McDonald’s; both spent holidays at the same Florida resort; both had a tree in the garden with a white bench around it; both had vasectomies; both drank the same beer; both chain-smoked the same cigarettes.[16]

I

The Telepathy Taboo

Truth passes through three stages. First it is ridiculed,
then it is violently opposed, and then it is accepted as obvious.

—Anonymous

This book is about an ancient, but highly controversial, topic: the existence of psychic activity. Many of the things you will read on these pages might be difficult to believe, especially if you are learning about them for the first time. This is because research into so-called psi phenomena has long remained a "fringe" pursuit that is frowned upon—and actively discouraged—by mainstream science despite the vast quantity of evidence that has been gathered over the course of the last two centuries. As we shall see, the reasons for what we like to call the "telepathy taboo" are complex and at least partly cultural in nature, and we will get to them shortly. For now, however, let us cut to the chase and share our conclusion with you right up front: *psychic activity is real, as real as the book you are holding in your hands*. Not only have telepathy and other forms of ESP been demonstrated literally *thousands* of times to innumerable investigators, but they have also been an integral part of the human experience since the dawn of civilization, and probably much longer. Although psi phenomena are still largely ignored by mainstream observers for what are, at bottom, essentially ideological reasons, many prominent corporations and public institutions have a very different view, even if it's one they don't aggressively publicize. They have adopted a more pragmatic stance toward the subject, quietly utilizing the talents of those who have learned how to master psi powers: to cite just two examples, police forces frequently use psychics to

help solve cases, while mining companies and large utilities regularly hire dowsers to find underground mineral deposits and broken water mains.[17]

This refreshingly practical approach is much more common than many realize. Recognizing the potential of psi, governments have also gotten into the act. The CIA, in fact, has been known to use remote viewing (a fancy word for *clairvoyance*) to acquire intelligence about America's enemies—intelligence that would have been next to impossible to obtain by any other means. The public would likely have never heard about the spy agency's program had it not been for freedom of information legislation, along with the publication efforts of those who participated in the project itself. It should be noted that the work done by the CIA was not unique or even unusual: in fact, it was prompted by similar Cold War projects already underway behind the Iron Curtain, where Soviet scientists had engaged in well-funded psi-related endeavors for years before the US decided it was time to follow suit. As Ingo Swann (the psychic who coined the term *remote viewing* while participating in the CIA program) observed:

> In 1969 American intelligence analysts began learning, much to their initial disbelief, that researchers in the Soviet Union had become deeply involved in understanding ESP and its potential applications. The Cold War was very hot at that time, and many analysts began wondering if an ESP gap existed between us and the then aggressively militant Soviet Union. As a result, it suddenly became necessary to dig into psychic potentials.[18]

As we will learn, psychic activity has not only been extensively studied over the past two centuries, but it has also surfaced in reliable historical reports since ancient times. It's therefore something of a puzzle that psi is still considered—at least in mainstream circles—to be (take your pick) a bad joke, a cruel hoax, or a perplexing mystery. The thing is, so many investigators have confirmed psi's existence that to call it a joke or a hoax is to utterly ignore the truth of the matter. It is quite clearly neither of those. It's almost a misnomer to even call it mysterious. Is it controversial?

Absolutely. But only to those who refuse to look at the mountains of evidence that have piled up over the course of decades. Indeed, so much evidence has accumulated that Stanford physicist Russell Targ, who helped develop the CIA remote viewing program (and the laser beam), once stated that "the experimental evidence for ESP…is so strong and overwhelming that reasonable people should simply no longer doubt its reality." Targ went on to note:

> While working for the CIA program at our lab in Menlo Park, California, our psychic viewers were able to find a downed Russian bomber in Africa, to describe the health of American hostages in Iran, and to locate a kidnapped American general in Italy. We also described Soviet weapons factories in Siberia and a Chinese atomic bomb test three days before it occurred, and performed countless other amazing tasks.[19]

It shouldn't surprise anyone that research in this area has been led by physicists like Targ: after all, physicists *need* to think outside the box and overturn assumptions about what is and what is not reality. It's because of physics that much of the orthodox thinking of the past several thousand years has been swept away. Targ is just following in the footsteps of his more famous predecessors, that group of physicists and mathematicians—led by Isaac Newton, Rene Descartes and, more recently, Albert Einstein, Kurt Gödel and Wolfgang Pauli—who radically changed the course of human history and brought our current world into existence. In particular, it was the rise of quantum physics in the early 20th century that turned mainstream scientific thinking completely upside down; Targ and other parapsychology researchers are only walking through the doorway created by the newfangled view of the cosmos that the founding pioneers of this revolutionary science brought to the fore.

And there's no question that quantum physics was a radical departure from what came before it: there have, in fact, been few intellectual shifts in history that compare. Because of it, a new and rather frightening era of

almost unthinkable weapons and other technologies arose, rebooting and reconfiguring the daily lives of everyone across the width and breadth of an entire planet. Atom bombs, nuclear reactors, laser beams, transistors, semiconductors, computers and a host of other technologies took the world that existed prior to World War II and vaporized it. But all those technologies depended on the mental breakthroughs of a relatively small number of scientists. We have already mentioned Einstein, Gödel and Pauli; to that list we would add Erwin Schrödinger, Werner Heisenberg, Max Planck, Arthur Eddington (the astrophysicist who confirmed relativity theory) and Charles Townes (the driving force behind the first laser beam). But although entire libraries are filled with book after book after book about their contributions to science and technology, what isn't well known is the fact that *every last one of them was a mystic of one variety or another*.

Surprised?

Einstein was a theist who was convinced he had witnessed ESP in action on more than one occasion. Max Planck? He was a practicing Christian. Heisenberg? He believed that both physics *and* spirituality were needed for a complete understanding of reality. Pauli? Considered by many to have been even more brilliant than Einstein, Pauli believed that rationality was incomplete without mysticism: he stated quite openly that he had no objection to the notion of life after death, and it's clear from his writings that he more than simply entertained the notion that what he called "posthumous entities" (*spirits*, in other words) could make contact with the living. As Harvard historian Juan Miguel Marin observed:

> Pauli favored a hypothesis of "lucid mysticism," a synthesis between rationality and religion. He speculated that quantum theory could unify the psychological/scientific and philosophical/mystical approaches to consciousness. Pauli's perspective was influenced by the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, whose views on reality were in turn influenced by Eastern religions.[20]

Pauli also collaborated with Swiss psychologist Carl Jung on the concept of synchronicity, itself a mystical notion borrowed from ancient India and China. Then, of course, there was the famous Pauli Effect, which was named after the famed physicist. This referred to his uncanny ability to cause experimental equipment to go haywire simply by being in close proximity to it. Most people today would probably not think to associate such psi phenomena with one of the greatest physicists of all time, but his colleagues considered it to be so real a threat to their equipment that he was banned from their labs.

What we can—and should—conclude from all these examples is simple. *The fact that so many truly exceptional scientists and thinkers of the past century have made room in their minds for mysticism in general and psi phenomena in specific should, in turn, prompt us to be more open minded about these subjects as well*. In short, we are wrong to believe that science and mysticism are foes. We are also wrong to think that believing in one means automatically dismissing the other. To put this even more bluntly: if mysticism was okay with Einstein, Heisenberg and Pauli, then it's probably a bit unwise of us to shoo it out the door without at least giving it a cup of tea and hearing what it has to say *first*.

But let's assume that just isn't enough to convince you. Let's assume that the mere fact that Einstein, Heisenberg and Pauli were mystics is insufficient to make you want to offer such a gesture of intellectual hospitality.

How about Schrödinger, then?

Schrödinger, another winner of the Nobel Prize for physics, was as mystical as they come. He kept a copy of ancient Indian spiritual texts—the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita—next to his bed. Among his beliefs: that the human mind was "indestructible." Then there was Eddington, who almost singlehandedly propelled Einstein into fame. He defended mysticism in a famous work, *The Nature of the Physical World*, in 1929. Charles Townes? Like Planck, Townes was a practicing Christian. He not only believed that religion and science should work hand in glove, but also that scientific breakthroughs are like *religious revelations* that come into the

minds of scientists like bolts out of the blue. He in fact explicitly compared such mental downloads to those received by Moses and the Buddha.[21] Townes was hardly the only famous scientist to believe in such "superstitions" as God and the afterlife. Newton—probably the most famous physicist of all time and the man who almost singlehandedly launched the enterprise we call modern science—spent *years* trying to decode "hidden messages" that he believed God had inserted into the Holy Bible.

All in all, it's difficult to escape the conclusion that the true geniuses behind the explosive rise of modern science were *all* mystics to one degree or another. Cornelis Escher, the ingenious Dutch artist, understood this perfectly. He made a practice of teasing the scientists among his acquaintance by reminding them that *none* of the founders of modern science were atheists. Say what you like about that: what you *can't* say is that it's false.

To many of us living in the 21st century, however, the news that an entire generation of prominent scientists—including the very ones who coaxed our current world into its present shape—was populated by mystics is almost too shocking to believe. We've become so brainwashed by conventional thinking on the subject that we think it's *obvious* that science and spirituality are at odds—even at war. But none of the scientists mentioned thus far believed that to be so, and it's that fact that should make us pause before rushing to judgment on the subject of spirituality or psi.

The fact of the matter is that Russell Targ and other parapsychology researchers *aren't* complete voices in the wilderness when it comes to believing in the validity of psi-related phenomena—the kind of phenomena that some observers (including the authors of this book) believe provided the inspirational spark that brought ancient religions into existence around the world. Quite the contrary. They're merely the latest in a long line of respectable, and in many cases revered, scientists whose minds were perfectly prepared to accept psychic activity as 100% real.

One such scientist, Brian Josephson (winner of the 1973 Nobel Prize for his pioneering work on superconductors), speculated recently that quantum

physics might eventually be able to explain telepathy: he didn't question the fact that telepathy exists; for him, it was obvious that it did. Was he a rarity, a unicorn, a complete outlier among scientists for saying so? Hardly. After watching a series of demonstrations at the house of his friend, Upton Sinclair, no less a luminary than Einstein wrote a forward to the German edition of Sinclair's study of ESP, *Mental Radio*, urging his fellow scientists to investigate the phenomenon. Einstein (along with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle) also endorsed an American psychic by the name of Gene Dennis, stating:

> She told me things no one possibly could know, things on which I have been working, and she demonstrated to me that she has a power to do things I cannot at this time explain. Now, I must tell some of my associates about this. It was miraculous indeed.[22]

Still not satisfied?

You're a tough crowd.

Moving along, three of the founding fathers of modern psychology—Sigmund Freud, William James and the aforementioned Jung—also believed in psychic phenomena. Freud believed he had communicated telepathically with his daughter Anna. But like many others before and since, the pioneering psychologist was afraid of making his views public. One of the few exceptions we can discover is when he stated, in 1922, that "sleep creates favorable conditions for telepathy." In his private correspondence, he was more forthcoming than in public:

> [Freud] had an early fascination with the idea that thoughts from one person's mind could somehow be transferred to the mind of another, and had engaged in an extensive correspondence with Hungarian psychiatrist Sandor Ferenczi on the subject. Throughout that correspondence, Freud asserted that "thought transference"—his term for telepathy or ESP—was a thoroughly real and important aspect of how humans communicate. But he also

> insisted it was too politically dangerous even to discuss in public, much less credit. He repeatedly warned Ferenczi to keep the issue quiet to preserve their reputations as men of science.[23]

As for William James, in the latter part of the 19th century he referred to the spiritual medium Leonora Piper as someone who had deeply shaken his skepticism about the paranormal. “I cannot resist the conviction,” he stated, “that knowledge appears which she has never gained by the ordinary waking use of her eyes and ears and wits.”

> What the source of this knowledge may be I know not, and have not the glimmer of an explanatory suggestion to make; but from admitting the fact of such knowledge, I can see no escape.[24]

A scientist to the core, James was obviously conflicted when it came to this issue. So was Jung. Now best known as the founder of analytical psychology, he was, for a time, one of Freud’s closest collaborators. We’ve already mentioned Jung’s notion of synchronicity, which is about as mystical a concept as you’ll ever find. Synchronicity can be boiled down to the notion that some coincidences just *aren’t* coincidences at all, though exactly what they are is difficult to determine, given Jung’s cryptic discussion of the topic; he was just as reluctant as Freud to speak openly about some of his more mystical ideas. Still, the examples of synchronicity provided by the Swiss psychologist make it abundantly clear just how much of a mystic he truly was. Here’s a famous one:

> A young woman I was treating had, at a critical moment, a dream in which she was given a golden scarab. While she was telling me this dream I sat with my back to the closed window. Suddenly I heard a noise behind me, like a gentle tapping. I turned around and saw a flying insect knocking against the windowpane from the outside. I opened the window and caught the creature in the air as it flew in. It was the nearest analogy to a golden scarab that one

> finds in our latitudes, a scarabaeid beetle, the common rose-chafer, which contrary to its usual habits had evidently felt an urge to get into a dark room at this particular moment.

The beetle "just happens to appear" at the precise moment when the woman is recounting a dream about a beetle, but to Jung it's much more than a mere coincidence; yet he also doesn't want to say that the woman's dream in some way *caused* the beetle to appear, for that would make him look too unscientific in the eyes of his contemporaries, so he muddies the issue. But it's quite apparent that's *exactly* what he believed. He just felt the need to cloak his beliefs in the most acrobatic language possible. When viewed in the larger context of his work—particularly his belief in a "collective unconscious" that connects all human beings through their subconscious minds, but also his fascination with psychic mediumship, the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation—his thoughts on synchronicity leave little doubt that his inclination tilted heavily toward a type of crypto-mysticism that likely would have been far *less* cryptic had it not been for his strenuous efforts at making his views palatable for the conservative academic audiences of his day. This observation is reinforced by the number of New Age writers today who are happy to incorporate his ideas into their openly mystical outlooks, something he was unable to do, given the cultural constraints imposed by his conventionally minded peers.

And it is this latter factor—peer pressure that sometimes borders on outright bullying—that has crippled research into paranormal phenomena for over a century. Academia is not receptive to psi or the people who study it, and the reasons have little to do with evidence or a lack thereof. Instead, they have to do with an ongoing taboo, or stigma, attached to psi research. This taboo is grounded in five mutually reinforcing factors, each of which has more to do with gender and culture than any so-called dearth of evidence for psi. The first four factors are: (1) for whatever reason, psi ability tends to surface more in women; (2) the sciences have always been dominated by men; (3) there has been and continues to be a Western cultural bias against psi-related activity, one that ultimately originates with

the male-dominated Christian church; and (4) most of mainstream science operates on the unproven assumption that all mental phenomena are ultimately *materialistic* in origin, thus creating an in-born bias against psi, which pays no attention to the physical boundaries that separate individuals.

For the vast majority of those who are familiar with both the evidence for psi and the history of Western civilization, all four factors are relatively obvious and in need of little elaboration. We will, however, be returning frequently to these points—particularly number four—throughout this book. For now, it will suffice to note that the primary reasons behind this taboo against psi can be traced directly to a patriarchal civilization that historically has tended to undervalue abilities that are more common in women. This does not mean, of course, that no men have been psychics or that all men are natural-born "psi debunkers," but simply that the status quo is biased against psi for the reasons stated above.

Now, we mentioned five factors. The fifth involves something that has long been recognized by parapsychology researchers and historians of science: despite all the rhetoric to the contrary, universities are no longer centers for the freewheeling exploration of ideas, if they ever were in the first place. Today's researchers find themselves trapped in a vast Kafkaesque bureaucracy where fear of one's peers and self-censorship are paramount in every area of research. The approval of one's peers is the difference between having a job and being out on the street; between being praised and being condemned. And lurking behind every corner are the sharp-tongued, caped defenders of modern science (their *version* of it, that is), who are just waiting for the chance to pounce on anyone who dares question the reigning paradigm in any fundamental way—and certainly a willingness to do research into paranormal activity constitutes just that, as we shall soon see. While the general public still suffers from the illusion that science is the unbiased pursuit of knowledge, and that scientists will go wherever the evidence leads, the truth has been otherwise for decades.

Skeptical of this claim?

In his seminal work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, historian of science Thomas Kuhn pointed out what had been obvious to many

sociologists for a long time, but which most mainstream scientists seemed content to ignore: namely, that revolutionary changes in science aren't ushered in by a "rational change of mind" following a dispassionate, evenhanded weighing of competing theories. That's pure fiction. Revolutions in the realm of ideas occur in much the same way as revolutions in the realm of politics. They take place if and only if the proponents of the old paradigm leave, or are pushed off, the field of battle —and are replaced by the proponents of a new regime. As the Nobel laureate Max Planck noted:

> A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.[25]

To put this another way, paradigm shifts in science chiefly occur as a result of retirement and death, *not* by getting more points at debating competitions. In fact, Kuhn directly compared a scientist's loyalty to any given theory to the loyalty a religious believer has to any given religion. Naturally, Kuhn's book, though extremely influential (Stanford's *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* regards it as "one of the most cited academic books of all time"), was also extremely controversial.

Science as religion?

Good lord!

Choosing theories on the basis of something other than the scientific method?

What heresy!

Now, it's not that scientists never have "good reasons" to choose a theory; it's not that theories can exist without any evidence in their favor. Kuhn's central message was more nuanced: essentially, it was that *scientists are social beings* like everyone else on the planet, and therefore subject to social pressure. And although he was really only stating the obvious, stating the obvious is sometimes as explosive as dropping a bomb. His observation

about the nature of scientific progress was about as popular among his fellow scientists as farting loudly in the middle of a lecture (or church service). Many scientists were horrified. In one stroke, Kuhn had done to science what science itself had been doing for centuries, but *never to itself*: he had reached forward and lifted up the curtain, revealing a glimpse of the hidden mechanisms operating behind the scenes of reality, which in this case was the reality of scientific decision-making.

All this is to say that when you hear the words "science doesn't support the idea of paranormal activity or psi," you need to remember that scientists are quite capable of donning blinders and completely ignoring evidence that doesn't conform to whatever paradigm is in fashion at any given time. It is a blind spot of massive proportions, and one whose roots are almost entirely *un*-scientific, as it has its origins in patriarchal power structures and the culture wars that began in the earliest days of the Scientific Revolution in Europe and America. In China, Russia and other non-Western countries, psi has been a topic of serious academic research for decades, and (as we have already seen) there has been no lack of government funding for endeavors that seek to find useful applications for psi.

But if you're a Western scientist—meaning a scientist in North America or Europe—and you're interested in researching psi, it's little consolation to know that non-Western countries don't share the same degree of prejudice against it. Western scientists who start "dabbling" in such matters quickly find that there are consequences for breaking the "rules" and looking into so-called spooky stuff. Such consequences include: (1) little to no funding; (2) an abundance of ridicule; and (3) no granting of academic tenure. (For the non-academics among our readership, academic tenure refers to the granting of a highly coveted permanent position at a university). This means that with the exception of an extremely limited number of universities, next to no research is currently being conducted into the paranormal despite the tremendous amount of evidence that has been collected over the course of the last 150 years.

But who needs evidence? In many scientific circles, evidence is irrelevant, at least as far as psi is concerned. For the reasons sketched

above, many scientists are either too close-minded or too afraid to seriously look at psi research and come to an informed opinion. If you think this is an exaggeration, ask Rupert Sheldrake. A former Cambridge University professor, he devoted his life to researching telepathy. Here's what he had to say about the reaction from his academic colleagues:

> The work I do excites very strong prejudices. In some cases it's a knee-jerk thing where they haven't actually read the paper [I've written]. The criticisms I have had from some people are often extraordinarily ill-informed. There is a whole set of taboos about what you can and can't do in science. There's no doubt that things such as telepathy have been on the taboo list for a long time.[26]

Similar observations have been made by Dean Radin, an electrical engineer and psychologist who worked on psi experiments for the US government. Writing about the suppression of psi research, he stated:

> The general public has always been interested in psi phenomena. But within the scientific orthodoxy, psi has been regarded as either a genuine hot potato or a Mr. Potato Head toy. Many scientists believe that psi is real, but like a hot potato it's too uncomfortable to handle…. The majority who believe that psi is real are forced to confront the problem of "forbidden knowledge," taboo topics that restrict the conduct, funding, and publication of certain ideas.… Because of social and political pressures, scientists shy away from controversial topics.[27]

What happened to Brian Josephson furnishes a perfect example of what occurs when a scientist—even a Nobel laureate—gets up enough courage to tackle the subject openly. The results do not paint a pretty picture of the scientific community. As the story goes, initially Josephson was approached by Britain's Royal Mail service to write something about his area of science as part of a centennial celebration for the Nobel Prize. Josephson used the

occasion to redress what he saw as a "serious imbalance" in publicly reporting the results of research into the paranormal. The remarks he made at the time give us an idea of what he thought of the so-called impartiality of mainstream science, at least when it comes to the topic of psi research: "I think journals like *Nature* and *Science* are censoring such research," he claimed. "There is a lot of evidence to support the existence of telepathy, for example, but papers on the subject are being rejected—quite unfairly."[28] Strong words, coming as they did from one of Britain's leading scientific lights. According to Josephson, the explanation behind psychic activity could be found at the subatomic level; he thought it distinctly possible that psychics are somehow able to direct random subatomic energy for their own purposes.

His remarks set off a firestorm among his more conservative colleagues. It was like he had defaced Galileo's grave or blown up the International Space Station. All the pit bulls of Britain's scientific establishment rushed to the fore, foaming at the mouth and demanding blood. Fellow physicist David Deutsch called Josephson's views "utter rubbish." "Telepathy," he bellowed, ignoring decades of evidence, "simply does not exist." Another scientist announced that Josephson had become "unstuck." Even the left-wing *Guardian* newspaper stuck a knife in. It left little doubt where its sympathies lay, suggesting the Nobel Prize winner had "gone off the rails" and that few scientists (naturally, it refused to name any) believed Josephson had done work "of any merit" since winning the prestigious award. Of course, the author of the *Guardian* article in question cited no evidence to back up such an outrageous evaluation of one of the pre-eminent scientists of the day. Neither did the writer provide as much as one iota of support for his comparison of Josephson's telepathy statements with the *racist* observations of a previous Nobel Prize winner, William Shockley. If the CIA had been in charge of discrediting Josephson, it could scarcely have done a better job.

Observing the sheer venom hurled at Josephson, it's easy to understand why scientists treat even the idea of doing psi research like the plague. If Nobel laureates get treated like pariahs for talking about ESP, imagine the

fate that would befall lesser mortals. Why risk everything—career, reputation, sanity—just to pursue a line of intellectual inquiry that is on Western science's black list? There are safer things to study, like Great White Sharks and nuclear explosions. Do not think, either, that Josephson was alone in bearing the brunt of the anti-psi mob mentality. Sheldrake, who held a top position at Cambridge, became the subject of crude jokes when his views on telepathy became known. Like the majority of dog owners, he had merely been guilty of suspecting that dogs could sometimes read their owner's minds and intuit their intentions, and he had had the audacity to pursue research that many believe backed up those suspicions. The response? The editor of *Nature* compared Sheldrake's work to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, writing that it was a top candidate for a book burning. The response he received was so enflamed—and so reminiscent of a witch hunt—that it almost makes one wonder what age we're living in. Is this *really* the 21st century? Or is it still the Middle Ages? And while we're on the subject of pointed questions, here's another: just why is it that all the so-called skeptics and debunkers protest *so* vehemently whenever telepathy and other psi phenomena are mentioned?

Could it be, perhaps, that they feel a wee bit threatened?

II

Gödel, Einstein & Townes: the Myth of Atheistic Science

The brain is a computing machine connected with a spirit.
—Mathematician Kurt Gödel[29]

There is this strange notion that all scientists are atheists and that science itself is inherently opposed to all forms of spirituality. As we have already seen, this is historically false and patently absurd. To name another example beyond the ones cited thus far, we put before you the fascinating case of Kurt Gödel. Along with Einstein and Charles Townes, Gödel furnishes us with a prime example of someone who was simultaneously a scientist *and* a mystic—and comfortable in both roles.

One of history's greatest mathematicians, Gödel had an immense impact on 20th century philosophical and scientific thought. After earning his doctorate by age 24, he published one of his famous mathematical theorems only a year later. His career in science eventually netted him numerous awards and prizes, among them the first Albert Einstein Award and the National Medal of Science. While his contributions to science place him firmly among the top cadre of 20th century thinkers, his views on the cosmos and humanity's place within it place him firmly within the mystic camp. Among other things, he believed in a type of superconsciousness—one similar, in basic outline, to Jung's collective unconscious—that existed *independently* of the physical brains of individual human beings. Call it what you like; he called it Mind with a capital "M" or sometimes just "God." When asked by a student to confirm whether he did indeed believe in such unorthodox ideas, the esteemed logician gave the following curt reply: "Of course," he snapped. "This is the basic mystic teaching."[30]

Gödel was baptized a Lutheran, but didn't care much for church or religious activity, conventionally conceived. Instead, he read the Bible in bed every Sunday morning and espoused a sophisticated view of divinity reminiscent of that propounded by the 17th century German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (who, together with Newton, is jointly credited with the invention of calculus, a point we'll return to shortly). Gödel also believed in an afterlife. He fully realized that such a view was at odds with both orthodox science and received wisdom, but that was of little concern to him. He was, in other words, intellectually stubborn, as most brilliant thinkers are. *He* was convinced; that's all anyone needed to know. *Religions*, he would pronounce, *are for the most part bad, but religion itself is not*.

Chew on that one for a moment or two.

Gödel and Einstein were pals, having formed a strong bond at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies, where they would often go for long strolls. In fact, it is said that Einstein had such deep respect for his fellow expatriate —he and Gödel had both fled Europe prior to the Second World War—that toward the end of his time at Princeton, Einstein had little interest in his own work, and came to Princeton merely to walk with his old friend. There is little doubt that mysticism was a frequent topic during these walks, as both men shared a deep interest in age-old questions surrounding religion, spirituality and the pursuit of *all* forms of knowledge.

As for Einstein's own views on religion, it should be pointed out that they were very different from the popular and somewhat mystifying mythology about him being some sort of secular genius. He actually had a deep and abiding passion for the subject of spirituality and religion, and was, in his own way, quite religious, much in the same unorthodox sense that Gödel was. Einstein also wrote extensively on the topic. He thought that it was "crass" to believe that religion and science were inherently in conflict. While he had much respect for the core values expressed in the Judeo-Christian tradition, he didn't insist on the absolute truthfulness of the Bible, seeing such literal thinking (as well as the idea of a bearded, human-like God) as erroneous and outside the true domain of religion, which he

believed should be squarely focused on *what should be* as well as what existed beyond the limited minds of human beings. From his perspective, far from being foes, religion and science were made for each other. This is clearly expressed in his famous statement:

> Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.[31]

In such matters, Einstein and Gödel had an important philosophical ally: Charles Townes, another Nobel laureate. Two years before Einstein's death in 1955, Townes was busy taking one of Einstein's insights and using it to develop a revolutionary device that would end up changing human civilization in profound ways. That invention was the maser. The maser (an acronym for microwave amplification by stimulated emission of radiation) was the forerunner of the laser, which Townes also helped develop. A device which has affected virtually everyone on the planet, the laser quickly found its way into practically every nook and cranny on Earth, from supermarket checkout machines to communication systems to DVD players. In fact, the laser has changed modern life so thoroughly that without it, the world would look very different from how it looks today.

As we have already seen, Townes had an unconventional view of the process by which new inventions and theories come into being: instead of believing that they are the end result of a long and tedious process of data accumulation and logical thinking (i.e., the much ballyhooed scientific method), he believed such breakthroughs sometimes came into a scientist's mind in *one fell swoop*—via a process he compared directly to a sudden religious revelation. Although we might be tempted to instantly dismiss such an idea—preferring to believe that in such cases the brain is simply "having a brainstorm" (as if that explains things)—it wasn't just idle speculation on his part. That was how the basic blueprint of the maser/laser came to him in the first place. It occurred as he was sitting quietly on a park bench in Washington, DC. That's when the idea for the laser somehow just popped into his head. After sketching it out on a notepad, he told some of

his colleagues about it. One was Niels Bohr, one of the founders of quantum physics. Bohr told him flat out that the idea would never work; he urged Townes to abandon it. Needless to say, Townes did no such thing, and the result, as they say, is history. But what *had* actually happened to him that day in the park? Our knee-jerk response—that it was merely the end result of the chemical-filled brain churning through data and finally emerging with an answer that only *seemed* like it was coming out of nowhere—is only an unproven assumption and quite possibly the result of cultural conditioning and a materialist bias. Certainly we can ask whether mental breakthroughs are truly only the product of the brain and nothing more: and that's *exactly* what Townes asked. Unlike his more ego-driven colleagues, Townes wasn't in any rush to give his own brain credit for the discovery. He was sure the laser idea came from *outside* of himself. Was he wrong? Fascinated by being on the receiving end of such an enormously important download of information, he began to look more deeply into the subject, turning to history to see if what had happened to him had a precedent.

It had.

He found that such sudden intrusions into the minds of both scientists and inventors were not unusual by any means. He wrote:

> [A] common idea about the difference between science and religion is based on their methods of discovery. Religion's discoveries often come by great revelations. Scientific knowledge, in the popular mind, comes by logical deductions, or by the accumulation of data which is analyzed by established methods in order to draw generalizations called laws. But such a description of scientific discovery is a travesty on the real thing. *Most of the important scientific discoveries come about very differently and are much more closely akin to revelation*. (Emphasis added)[32]

Townes then draws a direct comparison between how such flashes of brilliance enter the minds of scientists and how revelations from a higher

plane entered the minds of historical figures such as Moses (who had a revelation of a burning bush in the desert), Jesus (whose revelations are noted throughout the New Testament) and Buddha (who had a flood of world-altering insights while sitting beneath the Bodhi tree). After mentioning such religious examples, Townes returned to the realm of science proper and cited the example of the 19th century German chemist Friedrich August Kekule, the principal founder of the theory of chemical structure. As is well known, Kekule discovered the benzene ring (the benzene molecule has a ring-like structure) after relaxing next to his fireplace and suddenly experiencing a vision—one of snakes biting their own tails.

What makes Townes' insight so fascinating, however, are two things: first, he deliberately blurs the lines between science and religion; and second, he basically discards as unnecessary all the usual banter about the overriding importance of the scientific method when it comes to making profound discoveries of the first order. In his words:

> We cannot yet describe the human process which leads to the creation of an important and substantially new scientific insight. But it is clear that the great scientific discoveries, the real leaps, do not usually come from the so-called "scientific method," but rather more as did Kekule's—with perhaps less picturesque imagery, but by revelations which are just as real.[33]

Was Townes right? Certainly there is a case to be made that he was onto something, even though what that something *is* is only poorly understood (as are most things related to the human mind). A brief survey of the historical record finds many more examples of sudden, non-rational bursts of insight that led directly to monumental discoveries. The dreams of French mathematician Jules-Henry Poincare, for instance, led to major breakthroughs in mathematics. Albert Einstein once had a dream of Swiss cows; it led to the theory of relativity. Dmitri Mendeleev, who discovered the periodic table of elements, first saw it in a dream. Alfred Russel Wallace

once had a fever-induced hallucination: it sparked the theory of evolution by natural selection. Then there was the case of Rene Descartes. The French philosopher and mathematician (after whom an entire brand of reasoning known as *Cartesian thought* was named) had a single dream on the night of November 10, 1619, that led to his hugely influential treatise, *Discourse on Method*, which shaped scientific approaches during the Enlightenment.

Now we arrive at a crossroads. Which way you decide to go from this point onward will largely depend on which assumption you prefer: do you prefer to believe that the human mind is confined to the small lump of matter housed inside your skull, *or* do you prefer to believe that it is not limited by the skull at all, but that it uses the brain as a something akin to a radio receiver? The former assumption is embraced, for the most part, by mainstream science and medicine, at least as they are currently practiced in the Western world. The latter assumption is embraced by mystics of every variety, along with many of the scientists who have reviewed the evidence in favor of psychic activity and psi.

It's entirely up to you.

If you choose to believe that human consciousness is strictly confined to the brain, then scientists having dreams or sudden bursts of insight that lead to huge breakthroughs is "simply" a matter of the brain chugging along in the background and then spitting out a monumental discovery whenever it gets the urge or has the time. Such a discovery will seem like a surprise to the conscious mind, but we all know the conscious mind is not the sharpest knife in the drawer, and therefore it is easily surprised. In this view, there's nothing to see here, folks, so move along and let those brain molecules continue to churn away. (Wake us when there's something cool to report.)

But is it so crazy to consider option two as a viable alternative to this highly limited view of human consciousness? And what, if any, evidence is there to support the idea that our minds are not limited to the brain?

As we shall see, there's actually quite a lot.

In fact, there's so *much* evidence that the materialist view is, on balance, the far weaker position to adopt. For if consciousness is solely limited to the brain, how on Earth are we to explain psi? How are we able, for instance, to

explain the fact that a remote viewer sitting in a sealed-off room in California can describe a Soviet bomber more than 7,000 miles away? How are we to explain all the other evidence that supports the view that some—if not all—of us are, to a greater or lesser extent, capable of ESP? These phenomena simply *cannot* co-exist with the limited brain theory—and that is one of the reasons that mainstream science is so very uncomfortable with the entire idea of psi. To them, psi is a threat, just as it was to the Catholic Church in medieval times.

Since we are on the topic of scientific discoveries, we'd like to throw one last curve ball at you before we move on: what would you say if we were to tell you that hundreds of scientific theories and world-changing inventions were actually discovered *simultaneously* by separate individuals working in complete isolation from one another?

Sounds impossible, doesn't it?

This startling claim was first made by William Ogburn and Dorothy Thomas, two Columbia University sociologists, whose research in the 1920s uncovered a remarkable series of "synchronicities" that would've thrilled Jung right down to his leather *lederhosen*. The duo published a paper listing no fewer than 148 inventions and scientific discoveries that appeared *simultaneously but independently* as a result of efforts by at least two individuals who did not collaborate with one another.[34]

You've probably heard of some of them.

We've already mentioned calculus. It was developed by *both* Isaac Newton and Gottfried Leibniz in the 1670s. The maser, which we've already mentioned, was invented by Charles Townes in 1953, but *described* by Soviet scientists in the previous year (though it would have been impossible for Townes to know that, as Russia and America weren't on talking terms). Then there's another famous invention: the telephone. It was invented by both Alexander Graham Bell and Elisha Gray in 1876—but independently of one another. The theory of evolution, one of the best-known theories in science, is another example. Alfred Wallace and Charles Darwin are both credited with coming up with it in the year 1858.

And the list goes on.

Oxygen? The element was discovered in 1774, when it was stumbled upon simultaneously by Carl Scheele and Joseph Priestley. Molecular theory? Avagadro and Ampere came up with it in the 1810s. Color photography? Invented in 1869 by Cros and du Hauron. Brownian motion? Independently explained by Einstein and Marian Smolnuchowski in around 1905. Our personal favorite? Sunspots. They were "discovered" by *four* different people in *four* different countries in the course of the *same* year (1611): by Galileo (in Italy), Scheiner (Germany), Fabricius (Holland) and Harriet (England). (The quotation marks are necessary because unbeknownst to the Europeans, the Chinese had already discovered sunspots over one thousand years earlier.) Second prize goes to Joule, Thomson, Colding and Helmholz, the four scientists who *independently* formulated the law of conservation of energy in the grand old year of 1847.

So how in the world do such simultaneous discoveries happen?

Good question.

Columbia University sociologist Robert Merton was of the opinion that such "multiple discoveries" were actually the *common pattern* in the history of science. As for telling us why they come about, historians of science have twisted themselves into human origami trying to explain how such *identical* contributions by seemingly isolated individuals could possibly have occurred. Was it just coincidence? That explanation only holds water if you're smoking whatever Jung was smoking. Were all these scientists secretly passing notes to each other across oceans and over vast expanses of land? That's extremely unlikely, given the difficulties involved and how much was at stake: after all, everyone wants to be the first to the finish line, so everyone has a vested interest in not communicating anything to their rivals. Did they all "just happen" to be working on the exact same problem at exactly the same time, with the exact same knowledge base, and it was therefore "inevitable" that they would come up with the exact same solution at the exact same moment in time? This is more or less what Merton suggested, but as an explanation it only holds water if theories and inventions are as predictable as numbers in a series. If only. Besides, there's nothing *inevitable* about inventing the radio, color photography or the jet

engine (another example on the list). Such devices never *had* to be invented. Were all these discoveries somehow "determined" in advance, as some sociologists believe? Um, that's even more mystical than we are. Besides, if they *were* determined in advance, by whom or by what? Our alien overlords? (Better whisper. "They" might be listening.) Impersonal laws of human behavior? Please. Such determinism is just another example of the "physics envy" that has run rampant in the social sciences since physicists invented A-bombs and blew them up over Japan.

Let's apply Ockham's razor, the oft-cited principle that the simplest explanation is best. We all know how much scientists of every variety love quoting this maxim (and we're sure they all know that it was named after the 14th century mystic and Franciscan friar William Ockham). The simplest explanation, in fact, is staring us in the face, at least when the evidence for ESP is taken into account, as it properly *should* be: *the individuals in question were not isolated individuals at all*. Something connected them. That much is certain, even though the exact nature of that *something* is not. What we have seen, again and again, is that psi phenomena contradict the very notion that there is such a thing as an "isolated" individual. *In fact, psi contradicts the very notion that the mind is limited to the brain*.

The limited brain theory is *oldthink*. Both it and the larger materialist paradigm of which it is a part are dying; their adherents just haven't figured that out yet. It's a slow death, to be sure, but the Grim Reaper sometimes likes to take his time. History shows us again and again that every paradigm, worldview and philosophy crumbles into dust eventually, and the materialist paradigm is no exception to the rule. Its demise has been clear, at least to some, since the advent of quantum physics and the flood of research into psi that occurred in the first half of the 20th century. Whether we realize it or not, we have one foot in the materialist world—the world of solid objects, linear time and Newtonian thinking—and one in the post-materialist world, where everything is about energy and the power of mind. In the former, things like psi and telepathy have no place, which is a key reason why the defenders of the status quo push the panic button whenever you talk about them. In the new world, however, everything has changed. In

it, far from having no place, psi has *pride* of place. That this shift between worlds constitutes a fundamental challenge to the powers that be is so obvious, it barely merits mention. *Because if individuals seemingly isolated in space and time can somehow communicate with one another, intercept each other's ideas, know what each other is thinking without any visible, physical means, well, what then?* Well, we've just seen what happens then. The entire materialist paradigm is tossed out the window, having suffered yet another mortal blow. And *that* is what has some people so very, very afraid.

Is there a revolution brewing?

We believe there is.

And there is nothing that makes the Establishment of any age or paradigm more panicky than talk of revolution. All this rebellious chitter-chatter about "psychics" and "psi" and "telepathy" and "spirituality," well, that's enough to make the caped crusaders of Big Science—Richard Dawkins, for instance, an Old World thinker if there ever was one—snap at their servants and choke on their caviar. You'd think the revolutionaries are already pounding away on the front door, demanding the keys to the palace.

And perhaps, just perhaps, they are.

III

Over the Top

Silos, Psychics & Science

I regard matter as derivative from consciousness.[35]

—Max Planck

We'd now like to introduce you to someone who may prompt you to redefine the very idea of what *over the top* means. Think of it as an extreme example that will make everything else we say seem moderate in comparison. His name was Srinivasa Ramanujan, and, as with Gödel, he is widely regarded as one of the greatest mathematicians of all time. He produced nearly 4,000 mathematical proofs and equations in his lifetime, an almost unmatched effort that was made all the more remarkable by the fact that he died in 1920 at the age of 32. Not only was he far ahead of his time, but his work continues to inform and inspire the efforts of mathematicians today. So impressive was his ability to do advanced math that a Cambridge University mathematician, Godfrey H. Hardy, arranged for the young prodigy to travel to the UK on a full scholarship. And how impressive was he? Let's ask the *Encyclopedia Brittanica*.

> Ramanujan's knowledge of mathematics (most of which he had worked out for himself) was startling. Although he was almost completely unaware of modern developments in mathematics, his mastery of continued fractions was unequaled by any living mathematician.

High praise, indeed. But what the conservative authors of the encyclopedia fail to mention is just how it was, *exactly*, that Ramanujan

came by all this advanced mathematical knowledge. Well, here's a novel idea: why don't we ask *him?* The answer is startling. According to Ramanujan, his knowledge of mathematics came to him in a series of dreams. And not just any old dreams, but dreams that featured a starring performance by an Indian deity by the name of Namagiri, the Hindu goddess of creativity. A devout Hindu, Ramanujan once said that "an equation for me has no meaning unless it expresses a thought of God"—and he didn't mean that figuratively. He greatly annoyed his Cambridge sponsors by refusing to take them up on their offer of financial support until he had received permission from his *other* sponsor, the goddess. The pious young mathematician waited and waited, delaying his departure for over three months, until one day she came to him in a dream and bestowed her blessing. This says quite a lot about the depth of his religious devotion, as he was both barefoot and impoverished, with a young wife and very little income.

Describing his dreams, he said he would see drops of blood followed by scrolls filled with mathematical equations that would unroll before his eyes. Naturally, once awake he would scribble them down furiously. Many of his insights were so advanced that they were completely lost upon the mathematicians of his day. Even on his deathbed he continued to receive such revelations from the goddess, although the last ones he received were so far ahead of his time that it wasn't until more than 80 years later that they were proven to be correct. And not only were they "correct": they had the potential to explain astronomical phenomena such as black holes, which of course were completely unknown (at least by mere mortals) in the year 1920, the time of his passing.

Earlier we saw how the dreams of scientists like Einstein, Kekule and Descartes led to dramatic breakthroughs in the understanding of the universe. Ramanujan is clearly another name to put on our list. Again, the dots you connect and the implications you draw from this depend, as we have said, on the underlying assumptions you plug into your mind as you attempt to process the information. We're not going to do that for you; but we will sketch out what we believe to be reasonable possibilities, based on

the facts before us. First, though, let's look at the big picture for a moment. The portrait we are regularly given regarding science is that it is squarely focused on the patient collecting of dusty old facts which, once properly cleaned up by the scientific method, are eventually, after careful deliberation and discussion and dissection and evaluation (etc., etc.) transformed into laws, theories and technologies. But the portrait we are getting from *actual* scientists—famous ones responsible for the breakthroughs that built the modern world—is very different. *Revelations*. *Dreams*. *Religious experiences*. *Mystical insights*. Whatever this is, it is *not* science as we have been taught to view it; this is something entirely different, something not boring at all, something that is both adventurous and otherworldly at the same time. Moreover, Einstein, Gödel, Ramanujan, Townes, and the rest, *expressly* came out of the rationalist closet and said things that today most of us consider rather shocking. To summarize, this is what they said: (1) science and spirituality are NOT in conflict, nor should they be; and (2) the paranormal is something real that needs to be investigated. In Ramanujan's case, the operative word was not *investigate*, but *worship*, as he considered the knowledge enterprise to be a sacred activity. But of course, you are completely free to say, in response, "So what if some of the smartest people in history said that scientists should look into psi phenomena?"

You are certainly free to adopt that stance.

But if, somehow, you were ever so fortunate to find yourself in a room with Einstein, Gödel, Townes, Ramanujan, Pauli and the rest of them, and they were talking about psi, spirituality, God, mysticism, and so on, *and in ways that showed they had deep respect for such topics*, can you *really* tell us you would shut your ears and walk away?

Or would you pull up a chair and listen?

The portrait of science we are presenting may seem harsh at times and radical at others, but it is also accurate. To illustrate this, let's examine more expert testimony, this time from one of the top researchers in parapsychology. Robert McConnell, a British scientist (Ph.D. in engineering physics) who lectured at the University of Pittsburgh, was the

first president of the Parapsychological Association, whose focus, as one might surmise, is the scientific study of psi and the paranormal—you know, the "spooky" stuff that makes the lab coat crowd squirm and do the funky chicken. Some thirty years of research in his own laboratory convinced him that telepathy *and* telekinesis (the moving of objects with the mind) were real phenomena. The thing is, he had known this before he even started, because similar research, with equally convincing results, had already been performed a full three decades earlier by Joseph Rhine and his wife, Louisa, at Duke University.[36] Of their research, McConnell wrote: "[it] met all of the customary procedural standards of psychological research. Taken as a whole, [it] constituted, in my judgment, proof of the reality of laboratory psychokinesis."[37] That proof, McConnell went on to say, had been demonstrated again and again over the course of many decades. So why were mainstream scientists still so insistent that there was nothing to brag about in the findings produced by the Rhines, McConnell and others? According to McConnell, the reasons were clear:

> [The] adverse reaction to our findings by eminent physicists (with many of whom I had established professional rapport at the MIT Radiation Laboratory in World War II) and the irrational reasons given by editors for rejecting our report…led me to conclude that the scientific leaders of our time would not competently examine empirical evidence for phenomena that do not fit their preconceptions of what is possible.

McConnell's research, like the research conducted by the Rhines at Duke, was largely ignored: not because it was without merit, *but because it did not fit the preconceived ideas of the status quo*. Unsurprisingly, the negative reaction of the mainstream scientific community left him puzzled.

> The scientific mystery of psi phenomena lies, not in their occurrence—for they are commonplace throughout history—but in their *a priori* rejection by Western science.

One is tempted to draw an analogy: you can't see the elephant in the room if you have the lights switched off and guards with machine guns stopping anyone who dares turn them on. Too dramatic? Well, McConnell didn't think so. In a book published in 1983, he wrote a chapter containing advice to young researchers contemplating a career in parapsychology. Few reading it would ever choose to pursue that area of study. If, however, they ignore his advice and summon enough bravery to do so anyway, they will find the gatekeepers in the scientific community—the people who hold the keys to funding and academic degrees—blocking their attempts to proceed. They will push you into other subject areas, stall your degree, interfere with your proposals and malign your reputation. You will wish you never even *contemplated* researching the topic. After observing the myriad ways in which academic authorities erected such roadblocks in front of one of his students who aspired to become a researcher, McConnell drew a conclusion that might sound surprising, coming as it did from a scientist of such long standing: he concluded that the opposition to parapsychological research was primarily the result of *fear*. "What motivation do we find in my student's adversaries?" he asked. "In every segment of this tale, as we tear the weft, we discover anxiety in the warp." Then he delivered his coup de grâce:

> Much of the world's unhappiness is caused by self-respecting people driven to brutish behaviour by unarticulated fear. From the present case, we learn that, because of their fears, *scientists are not to be trusted as professional experts.* There is a special application of this idea, which I shall simply state here… Hidden in scientists' many reasons for discouraging research on ESP lies *fear of its possible reality*. Understanding the status of parapsychology begins with the recognition of this clinical fact.[38]

Fear may have been one reason behind the erection of roadblocks, but McConnell knew it wasn't the only one. Among others he cited was one

that has hamstrung scientific research in many areas for at least the last century: specialization. There has been increasing recognition, both inside and outside academia, of the multitude of problems that arise when individual researchers and academic departments become too narrowly focused on one particular field, subfield or sub-sub-field. Researchers become completely disconnected from one another, unable to speak each other's language, and certainly unable to participate in much of what goes on around them.

In such a world of silos, the focus not only becomes strictly on one's tiny area of research, but, given fiscal reality in an age of cutbacks and tight budgets, on protecting *your* silo from other silos. If you think politicians fight bitterly over budgets—and they do—that pales in comparison to the infighting that goes on between academic silos over research dollars. Naturally, it's a battle fought with velvet gloves and poisoned teapots rather than bullets and missiles, but it's very real, nonetheless, and if your opponent has been naive enough to approve a particularly controversial research project (say into parapsychology?), well, that's almost like handing you their share of the loot without a shot being fired.

The main advantage of the silo approach is not, as one might expect, the ability to do in-depth research into one topic, thus leading to breakthroughs like the one that emerged out of the Manhattan Project, which produced the world's first A-bomb and ended the Second World War. The *main* advantage is that hardly anyone will be able to criticize your research, because they're not qualified. How could they be? They can't even speak your language. After all, they're in a *different* silo. There are cases, in fact, of tenured academics teaming up and deliberately developing their own highly specialized sublanguages so that their work becomes completely cryptic and totally impenetrable to outsiders, and thus impervious to criticism. After all, how can you criticize people when you don't even know what they're saying? By becoming a super-specialist, you essentially build a protective wall around your research—the academic equivalent of a medieval fortress, surrounded by walls and moats made out of cryptic codes and incomprehensible detail that most others will ignore or avoid.

For someone seeking nothing more than a stable career in academia, this kind of approach obviously has a major payoff. McConnell hinted of this in his observations about the history of psi research—a research area that initially attracted some of the world's foremost scientists, who came together to form the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in the late 19th century. As McConnell notes:

> Among its early members, the society…included some of the great scientists of the Victorian Age: Alfred Russel Wallace, William James, Pierre Janet, Charles Richet, Samuel Pierpont Langley, Heinrich Hertz. Two Nobel physicists, Lord Raleigh and Sir J.J. Thompson, assisted in governing the society. You will look in vain for scientists of that caliber in the membership of the Parapsychological Association today. Despite great efforts by a few investigators, it was fifty years before psi phenomena were partially domesticated for laboratory experimentation by J.B. Rhine at Duke University. By that time, the age of scientific specialization was upon us, and *even Nobel Prize winners were content to tend their flowers within walled gardens.* Any truly new field could expect no help from the rest of science. (Emphasis added).

In summary, whether it's the result of such narrow, silo-based battles or just simple fear, the telepathy taboo has become firmly entrenched in academic circles. As we will see in future chapters, it is simply *not* the case that psi phenomena haven't been demonstrated. It's that they've been deliberately ignored, and research into them has been strangled. The so-called debunkers don't even look at evidence. Why should they? They have the weight of received opinion on their side, and that allows them to shoo away evidence as easily as shooing away flies. *It's been debunked*, they say. How easily that rolls off the tongue; you'd almost think they'd cracked open a book and read something about the topic.

It's funny, in a sad way. Our civilization is prepared to spend over $13

billion on a single building to find a subatomic particle or $1 trillion to kill hundreds of thousands of people in Vietnam, but when it comes to spending a tiny fraction of that to find out if humans can move objects with their minds or intercept someone else's thoughts, few in the Western academic community are willing to spend a dime. But then again, they don't really *need* to do the research, do they? They just need to stop *ignoring* the research that's already there. Unfortunately, this involves the greatest intellectual feat imaginable.

It's called opening the mind.

IV

Looking Outside the Western Sandbox

How Eastern Mysticism Led to Biofeedback

If you leave out the spiritual nature of man,
you are not studying man at all.

— Alfred Russel Wallace

If you want an image that captures at one stroke the fraidy-cat materialists within today's scientific community (at least when it comes to psi), we would contend that it's not a group of walled gardens or silos that best sums things up, but a sandbox filled with children, all of whom spend their days intently studying individual grains of sand. The sandbox, of course, represents the material universe, that merely "physical" reality we all love and adore, and surrounding it is an invisible wall, one cleverly designed so as to make the inhabitants of the sandbox believe there is nothing else in the cosmos other than (you guessed it) sand. But sand is *sooooo* wonderful that few can be heard to complain. After all, sand can be measured. Counted. Quantified. Categorized. It can be compared, put into boxes, put on display, written about, tested, analyzed and used for making objects of almost endless variety. The children spend all their time happily playing in their lovely little box. They draw up endless lists of the types of sand they encounter; they develop whole new languages and classification schemes to describe it, as well as laws to determine its behavior. They gather in groups to debate, well, sand. They write learned papers, create learned societies, deliver learned lectures—all, of course, about sand. The list of laws about sand is nearly as endless as the sand itself, but that's okay, because, really, when it comes right down to it, there's nothing else worthwhile to do in a sandbox society but try to understand, um, sand. Besides, there's no funding

available for research into any other subject, and suggesting otherwise can get you banned from the better parts of the sandbox.

Occasionally, however, one of the children gets a glassy look in her eyes, begins staring off into space, and then, to the outrage of all, bravely suggests that perhaps there *is* something outside the sandbox. The other children shake their heads in dismay. "Of course there isn't anything out there, silly," they reply. "Sand is everything, the be-all and end-all, the Alpha and Omega, God."

McConnell was one of those who tried to convince us that there was something outside the sandbox paradigm. He was hardly alone in this regard. He joined a long and illustrious list of researchers, scientists, lay people, writers, musicians, artists and thinkers who tried to do the same: Einstein, Gödel, Ramanujan, Wallace, Arthur Conan Doyle, Arthur Koestler, John Lennon, and, of course, Charles Townes, Brian Josephson and innumerable others, all of whom did their best to alert us to the existence of that *something*. It was almost as if they were shaking us by the shoulders and trying to wake us up from our intellectual slumber.

Among those doing the shaking was the Society for Psychical Research. Back in 1882, when it began its investigations, its stated purpose was to "investigate claims of psychic and paranormal phenomena"—something it still does to this day, though not with quite the same fervor or public profile. Today the society is exceedingly cautious about what it says on the topic of psi, to the point where its representatives take pains to state that it holds "no corporate view" about the existence of paranormal activity. But back in the late 19th century, when the intellectual climate was more open to unorthodox views, it was a different matter. Many of their leading members, including psychologists such as William James and the Cambridge-educated Edmund Gurney, were completely convinced of the reality of psychic phenomena. Why? Basically, because the society had done its homework. Led by some of the most brilliant scientists of the day, the SPR assembled a massive amount of evidence for psychic activity, including a census that collected—and investigated—reports from a number of countries. Here's what present-day psychiatrist Dr. Elizabeth Mayer has to

say about the SPR's work on psi activity:

> Among the SPR's most impressive achievements was a careful census of 25,000 people regarding their experience of anomalous events. The census selected people at random from a number of countries, all of whom were asked "whether [they] had ever heard a voice, seen a form, or felt a touch which no material presence could account for." Roughly one in ten reported having had such an experience at least once. *Among those experiences, 14% corresponded to some distant and identifiable real event*. In other words, one person out of every 140 appeared to have experienced what the SPR named a "veridical hallucination," *a hallucination that was "true" in the sense that it reflected accurate knowledge of a verifiable event*. [Emphasis added.][39]

To put this another way: the SPR investigated claims that people were having visions of distant loved ones dying, and in a significant proportion of those cases, their investigators confirmed that the deaths *had* indeed occurred and that the news had *not* been communicated through normal means. Statisticians working for the society ruled out the possibility that the visions were simply due to chance, leaving little doubt in their minds that some people, at least, were capable of sensing the deaths of those they loved by means of what we would today refer to as remote viewing. This, by itself, was a highly remarkable result, and most mainstream scientists today remain ignorant of it.

It's also clear that the society didn't pursue its research haphazardly. With a membership that included some of Europe's foremost scientists, it was hardly a case of "anything goes." Much of its early efforts actually involved exposing fakes and frauds, who unfortunately crop up in every human endeavor, *including* the sciences, where the stakes are higher and the reward for success far greater.

And here we should pause, because as everyone knows, the issue of fraud keeps coming up when it comes to psi. Much hot air has been generated

about fake mediums and fraudulent seances since the SPR first began to investigate such matters in the 1880s, and for many skeptics, this is the first objection they reach for to discredit parapsychology as a whole. But think about this for a moment. Is it truly reasonable to discredit everyone who claims to have a psi-related ability because *some* were found to be frauds?

Scientists themselves may not like how that logic would play out if it were applied to their own research. To mention just one example, what if archeology and anthropology had been discredited following the Piltdown Man fraud? You may recall that in 1912 an amateur archeologist by the name of Charles Dawson *claimed* to have discovered the "missing link" between man and ape in the form of bones found in a gravel pit near Piltdown village in East Sussex, England. This, in fact, turned out to be a total fraud, though that wasn't determined conclusively until 1953—over 40 years later. Did anthropology cease to be an approved area of study as a result? Definitely not. Now look at physics, where fraud has actually been uncomfortably frequent. Was it abandoned after German physicist Jan Hendrik Schön's fraudulent claim that he had discovered a new superconductor at Bell Labs? No? Okay, what about chemistry? Was it abandoned after it was learned that Bengu Sezen, a Columbia grad student, had fabricated the data used in multiple publications, helping to destroy the careers of several fellow students in the process?

Of course not.

We could go on. Google "academic fraud," and you will get *millions* of hits—apparently fraud in academic circles is almost as popular as the Beatles. Yet though no one is suggesting we shut down universities because of all the fraud that takes place in them, the "fraud card" is trotted out again and again to discredit those who claim to have paranormal abilities. If such accusations were truly sufficient to discredit entire categories of human activity, we'd have to shut down every university on the planet.

Now, to their credit, the investigators of the Society for Psychical Research didn't merely expose fraudsters; they also verified that some psi practitioners *were* genuine. As the society website explains:

> Debate among its members with regard to particular subjects is often vigorous. However, it's fair to say that from the earliest times the consensus view of its members…has been that psi is real.

Yet still the skeptics persist in refusing to believe it. Guy Playfair, the author of numerous books on paranormal phenomena, compares the refusal of skeptics to believe in psi (despite the evidence) to those who refuse to believe in the Moon landings (despite the evidence). As Playfair relates:

> Astronaut Edgar Mitchell has reported meeting people who still refuse to believe [that he went to the moon], and people who experience psi often find themselves facing the same reaction. There is no place for it in their universe. It is taboo.[40]

It's germane to mention Playfair's own experiences in this regard, particularly as he was a participant in psi-related experiments that were carried out in England according to so-called Ganzfeld protocols. Supervised by Dr. Carl Sargent, the first psychologist to get a Cambridge doctorate with a parapsychological thesis, these involved a series of laboratory tests that used sensory deprivation in the hope of stimulating psychic activity. Sargent and his team kept their test subjects in isolation, reducing their sensory inputs by means of special lighting techniques and the use of ping pong balls (cut in half) over the eyes. At that point a "sender" (sometimes Sargent himself) would then attempt to "send" the contents of a series of pictures to the test subjects. Following this step in the process, the test subjects would be shown a series of four pictures, one of which was the one that had been "sent," and asked to guess which one it was. According to probability law, they had a 25% chance of guessing the correct picture. But the experiment, which was replicated at more than ten other research locations, gave very different results. *Under conditions of sensory deprivation, the subjects guessed correctly at a rate of nearly 40%.*

Still unimpressed?

Well, Playfair's own experience of the experiment led him to believe that

the accuracy rate was actually much higher: the only reason it wasn't recorded as such was because the images he saw while lying in the dark with ping pong balls over his eyes came to him in a jumbled mess that left matters open to interpretation. In other words, he was, in fact, receiving much more than 40% of the information the sender was projecting, but his untrained brain had mixed the incoming images into a jumble and then attempted to interpret them as images that were more familiar to those stored in its memory banks. This is easy to understand: a pole could be interpreted as a toothpick, the shore of a lake as a sea shore, a plane as a bird, and so on.

One example that illustrates this nicely is provided by another one of Sargent's test subjects, a Dutchman, who had dreamt the night *before* his test that the target painting would be a surrealist work by Magritte. The target picture did, in fact, turn out to be a surrealist work—but by Salvador Dali, not Magritte. That's one hell of a coincidence. And when a British journalist did the test, this is what happened:

> [He] reported seeing images of Spanish dancers and a Mayan temple, which had nothing at all to do with his target picture. When he got home, he switched on his television set and immediately saw a group of Spanish-style dancers in a film about Mexico, land of the Mayas.[41]

Another coincidence?

Of course, the skeptic would be furiously stamping his feet and pulling out his hair over the suggestion that any of this was the result of telepathy or clairvoyance. But we are more reasonable than that, are we not? To us, hearing such tales makes us pause a bit and go *hmmm*. Could the untrained mind simply mix up such incoming psi input, with a mental stew of images being the result, as Playfair suggests? Surrealist paintings are, by definition, blurry. In a dream, it'd be very easy to confuse one surrealist painting for another, would it not? Then there's another factor to be accounted for: how much time do any of us spend in sensory deprivation in the first place?

Under such conditions, it's quite conceivable that we could receive more of our usual share of incoming psi input: in fact, it's quite conceivable that we could become *flooded* with psi input. One would then have to be an accomplished meditation expert to be able to sort the wheat from the chaff. As for meditation itself, as anyone who's tried it knows, it's hardly the easiest thing to master, as the thing being mastered is the most unruly beast in creation, that being the bucking bronco known as the human mind.

But there are some who claim that the mind, and meditation, *can* be mastered: and that when they are, the results are extraordinary. Psi ability is one of the accomplishments regularly associated with advanced forms of meditation, at least according to the Indian religious mystics (some of whom we will meet shortly) who have made their views on the topic known. It should be noted, however, that such mystics also believe that psychic ability, though achievable, is something of a distraction on the way to ultimate enlightenment—at best, it's nothing to get excited about, just another marker on an almost endless spiritual quest. And skeptical as we in the West may be about such claims, we have to take into consideration the possibility that it may be our Western cultural inheritance, and *not* scientifically based skepticism, that is making us doubt that such abilities are possible. For as we shall see, in India, Brazil, Malaysia, Russia and other parts of the world, psi phenomena are more widely accepted—and embraced.

A fascinating example out of the East comes to us via the Indian subcontinent in the form of a *fakir*, or holy man, who allowed himself to be tested under rigorous laboratory conditions by a team of doctors. A religious ascetic, he was a man in his seventies by the name of Prahlad Jani. He had made a number of rather extraordinary claims: first, he said he had lived in caves since age eight; second, he said he had been in communication with a goddess; and last but not least, he said he hadn't eaten in decades. Now, it was, of course, impossible to prove the first two claims. But his third claim could, in fact, be at least partially tested, and that's what a team of doctors was happy to do. They placed him under 24-hour observation to see for themselves what would happen when he went

without eating. He spent the next ten days in a hospital room under constant video surveillance. All he was allowed was a small amount of water (100 milliliters, to be exact) each day. Even that was only used as mouthwash: once he had swished it around in his mouth a few times, the water was collected and measured in a beaker to make sure none had been consumed. None was. During those ten days, he surprised his observers by consuming *nothing*. Remarkably, despite the complete absence of food, doctors observed no deterioration in his physical condition other than a minor drop in weight. "I feel no need for food and water," the fakir stated, explaining to his wide-eyed observers that he had survived several decades without either because of a hole in his palate. Water drops filtered through the hole, sustaining his life—or so he claimed. Apparently this was a gift from the goddess.[42]

Now, we don't have to take his word for it, and the doctors who oversaw the experiment certainly didn't. But they were also highly impressed by what he demonstrated. While it is true that most people can live without food for several weeks, the average human being can last only three or four days, tops, without water—and it was undeniable that the man who had spent time under their observation had survived much longer than that without any at all.

Still, the objection could be made that he was simply a remarkable specimen—a human outlier, if you will. While spending ten days without water or food might impress you, me, and most of the medical community, skeptics will always be skeptics about such matters. But about ten years later, by which time Jani had reached his 82nd year on this planet, he was tested a *second* time. Returning to Sterling Hospital in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad, where the first test had been conducted, the fakir outdid his previous feat, this time spending not just ten, but *fifteen* days under observation. Again, he ate no food and drank no water. He also passed no urine or stool, a fact that further confounded his observers. When "somebody doesn't take food or water for seven or eight days," said one of them, a certain Dr. Sudhir Shah, "he surely dies." But Jani did not die. In fact, he seemed to thrive. Most of us would be thrilled to achieve such an

amazing feat of bodily endurance during our golden years!

Of course, perhaps it was not a feat of *bodily* endurance, after all, but a feat of mental or even spiritual endurance. In India there is an old saying: "Mind over matter; spirit over mind." The operative idea is that there is a hierarchy to the three levels of existence—matter, mind and spirit—with spirit ultimately in charge. In Oriental mystical traditions, the biggest challenge of life is to get to the point where the three function together in mutual harmony (a feat so difficult that it certainly rivals going without food or water for two weeks). Such inner harmonization requires a lengthy period of self-study and reflection, during which self-mastery is learned, usually the hard way, after many trials. This is a constant theme in all ancient philosophical and religious traditions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Platonism, Stoicism and Christianity. The case of the fakir shows us that such mastery hasn't been completely bulldozed over by the biases of materialistic modernization. Another case, also involving an Indian holy man, shows us even more.

In 1969 the extraordinary abilities of Eastern mystics came to the attention of several American researchers. One of them, Elmer Green, later became a pioneer in the area of biofeedback, which back then was considered a fringe idea. Green, a Minnesota native with a Ph.D. in biopsychology, was contacted by Dr. Daniel Ferguson, a hospital official in the Twin Cities. Ferguson told him he had encountered a yogi by the name of Swami Rama who had demonstrated an ability to "obliterate" his pulse. Intrigued, Green arranged for the swami to visit his lab in March 1970 for the purpose of conducting tests.

After hooking up the Indian holy man to electrocardiogram equipment and a polygraph, measurements were taken that confirmed the swami's claims. Among other things, Rama was able to raise the temperature of his hands *just by thinking about it*, a rather remarkable feat by itself, as body temperature is supposed to be under the control of the autonomic nervous system. But he was able to do much more than that. Indeed, not only was he able to raise the temperature of both hands, but he was also able to keep them at significantly *different* temperatures simultaneously: at one point,

one hand was 11 degrees warmer than the other. But all this was just an appetizer for the main event. Because after the hand warming demonstration, the swami told them he was going to do something even more shocking: he was going to *consciously* interfere with the operation of his own heart. The next day, following meditation, Swami Rama put his heart into what is called an atrial flutter: his heart rate suddenly jumped from about seventy to about three hundred beats per minute, which stopped it from pumping blood for about seventeen seconds, as confirmed by a cardiologist who reviewed the results. The heart expert in question, Dr. Marvin Dunne of the Kansas University Medical Center, looked at the ECG printout, then looked at Green and asked:

> "What *happened* to this man?"
> "Nothing," Green replied. "We took his wires off and he went upstairs and gave his lecture."[43]

As if demonstrating such control over his own heart and body temperature wasn't enough, the swami also showed he was capable of creating and destroying cysts within his own body: he could make them appear and disappear at will, allowing researchers to examine each one. But even that wasn't all. In front of numerous people in a closed room, he then caused a metallic object—two knitting needles glued together to form a crude compass—to move *using nothing but his mind*. He accomplished this by meditating in front of the makeshift compass at a distance of five feet.[44]

To prevent any accusations of trickery, prior to the demonstration researchers had provided the swami with a specially designed mask to ensure that he could not use his breath to move the needles. The swami even offered to wear a white sheet over his entire body to remove any and all doubt in that regard, but Green and the other observers said that such a precaution was unnecessary, as the mask was enough. However, after the demonstration had concluded, one of the observers claimed that the holy man was somehow using his breath to move the needles *anyway*, perhaps by "bouncing" his breath off his own chest and projecting it five feet into

the distance! One look at the photo of the mask rules out such a possibility: it fits snugly around his face, tightly abutting the chin.

But some people will never be satisfied.

One more point about the swami. He later demonstrated another remarkable ability: telepathy. On one occasion, an associate of Green's called, asking if she could visit in order to talk with the swami later that day. The swami agreed. Following the phone call, he turned to Green and asked for a paper and pencil. Once these were supplied, he wrote something down and then placed the paper face down on a chair without showing the contents to Green. That afternoon, following the swami's discussion with Green's colleague, Green asked the latter what she and the swami had spoken about. The woman said she had asked the swami seven questions. Among them: "Should my son go to a private school?" and "Should I return to college to get a Ph.D.?" As soon as she had finished asking her questions, the swami handed her the paper he had scribbled on earlier that day. On it, written in the swami's handwriting, were most of the questions she had just asked.

Let us add one last note about Green that's germane to our purposes, given our discussion of ESP and dreams. He once reported having a vivid dream about a friend's brother, who was a sailor for the US Navy in the Second World War. In it, Green saw the sailor complaining about a terrible infection in his leg. When Green awoke, he marveled briefly to himself about the vividness of the dream, and then dismissed it from his mind. One week later, something occurred to make him remember it: his friend informed him that his brother was convalescing in a Navy hospital—with an infected leg.

But that was just a crazy coincidence, right?

To return to the swami example for a moment, it's worthy of noting that throughout the historical literature on ESP, the ability of swamis to demonstrate telepathy has been repeatedly documented. Take the example of the swami encountered by the author Alson Smith in the late 1940s. At the time, Smith, who was working as a social worker, was about to give a speech about alcohol addiction in the American Mid-West. The evening

before his lecture, shortly after he had registered at his hotel, he was whiling away some time when he spotted an announcement that a Hindu swami would be giving a public address later that evening. To satisfy his curiosity, Smith decided to attend. The skeptical social worker listened from the back row of the room as the swami read poems in both Hindu and English before proceeding to captivate the attention of the audience by acting—*posing*, as Smith initially viewed it—as a spiritual medium. Twice the swami spoke about deceased relatives of audience members, identifying both the audience members in question and their late relatives by name. Convinced the swami was nothing but a fraud, Smith nevertheless felt a certain amount of admiration for the Hindu man's ability to sway a crowd: "It was an amazing and moving performance," he later wrote. "I thought to myself, Good heavens, what a clever charlatan!"[45]

Then something shocking happened.

The swami asked whether anyone with the name "Aleson" was in the room. Knowing that "Aleson" was an archaic way of spelling his name, Smith spoke up: "Could that be 'Alson'?" he inquired, spelling out his name. The swami paused for a moment, then replied in the affirmative, adding: "And the last name—Schmidt?" With a growing sense of surprise, Smith responded aloud with his true surname, while telling himself that the swami had somehow cheated, possibly by reading his name on the hotel register. But then the swami spoke again, saying he was "receiving" a middle name, that of "Jesse." This *was,* in fact*,* Smith's middle name, but it *wasn't* on the hotel register.

The swami, having now captured Smith's attention completely, went on to say he was receiving a message from Smith's late father. In the exchange that followed, the swami correctly identified the elder Smith by his full name *and* correctly identified that he had died when Smith was a boy. The swami also mentioned that Smith's mother was dead (correct), that Smith had named one of his children "Aleson" (close enough, it was "Alson") and, finally, that his father used to "leave cigars in the shutter." This last point, which on the surface looks rather enigmatic, was instantly understood by Smith, and must be seen as the swami's most spectacular "hit" of all. As

Smith relates:

> My mother had refused to let my father smoke cigars in the house, so he had always pinched them out and stuck them in the blinds over the porch window, where he could retrieve them on leaving the house.[46]

The level of personal detail here is simply too great for the incident to be explained away by saying it was a result of a successful cold reading. Fraud, too, can be ruled out: Alson only decided to go to the swami's lecture at the last moment; he had only just registered at the hotel an hour before; and there is *no* way the swami could have known that Alson's deceased father used to leave cigars in a shutter. No *normal* way, that is. In fact, when all is said and done, there are only three reasonable explanations for the swami's spectacular feat that day. The first is that he was doing what he *said* he was doing, which was channeling a non-physical intelligence, one that has historically been referred to by the name *spirit*. The second is that he was reading Alson's mind by performing an act of telepathy, which in itself would be quite remarkable. In other words, the swami was either a genuine spiritual medium *or* he was a superb telepath. The third possibility is perhaps the most unorthodox—and speculative—of all. It is one that might be unfamiliar to many readers, but it has been put forward by some parapsychology researchers to explain similar cases: the swami was somehow accessing something referred to in mystical circles as the Akashic Record, an invisible archive that exists independently of human beings, and which can be thought of as a compendium of human events; analogous to the cloud used in cloud computing, it supposedly exists on a non-physical plane, but is capable of being accessed by the appropriately trained mind. (Since we're talking about possibilities here, a fourth can be mentioned, as well—namely, that a combination of the three had occurred. After all, none of them necessarily excludes the others.)

Crazy as this all might sound, researchers have accumulated so many accounts like Alson's swami encounter that it's difficult to read them

without concluding at least two things: (1) the explanations provided by current scientific dogma are grossly inadequate; and (2) the world is far more mysterious than most of us believe. It is a world that seems to fit the outlooks of people like Einstein, Gödel and Josephson far better than it fits the outlooks of the school textbook writers, the skeptics, and the professional debunkers. And who knows? Maybe, centuries down the line, we will find that it fits the outlook of the swamis best of all.

Ordinary versus Extraordinary Psi

Why We Can't Bottle Psychic Ability & Sell it at Safeway

Some day psi research will be taught in universities with the same aplomb as today's elementary economics and biology.[47]

—Dean Radin, chief scientist,
Institute of Noetic Sciences

Earlier we met the Rhines, the husband-and-wife research duo at North Carolina's Duke University whose investigation of psychic phenomena in the 1930s and '40s is still cited by parapsychology researchers today. It was Joseph Rhine who coined the term "extrasensory perception" to describe the ability to acquire information without the use of the five known senses. He also introduced the term "parapsychology" to differentiate the study of ESP from mainstream psychology, which even then had a neurotic tendency to go into hysterics when confronted with the results of psi-related research. And research was exactly what he and his wife were good at: they performed thousands of experiments using specially designed Zener cards. Specifically designed to test for psychic ability, these cards were organized into decks of 25, with each card having one of five individual symbols on one side: a star, a cross, wavy lines, and a square. The tests the Rhines conducted were exquisitely simple: test subjects would attempt to guess which of the five symbols was on each card. According to probability, five correct guesses were expected for each deck of 25. Using statistical analysis, it was possible to determine how improbable it was to make an excess number of correct guesses—guesses beyond the five per deck that probability dictated. The results, which were repeated thousands of times

and by five different universities, caused a sensation across North America when they were announced—and for good reason. Subjects were guessing correctly more often than they were supposed to. Instead of guessing correctly 20% of time, they were guessing at a significantly higher rate—sometimes at a *much* higher rate.

One experiment involved their research assistant Joseph Pratt and a test subject by the name of Hubert Pearce, a divinity student. The two men synchronized their watches and went to different buildings on campus. At a predetermined time, Pratt shuffled a deck of cards and began turning them over one by one, taking exactly one minute for each card and recording the result. Meanwhile, in the next building, Pearce began guessing which cards he thought Pratt was turning over, making each guess at the same one-minute intervals in order to synchronize his activity with Pratt's. The process, once complete, resulted in two completely synchronized lists comprised of 7,500 guesses (that's a lot of guessing!). The lists were then compared to see how many correct guesses Pearce had made. As Elizabeth Mayer noted:

> Pearce produced astonishing results. On his first experiment with Pratt, he…averaged 9.9 hits per run of 25 cards instead of the expectable 5.[48]

This was indeed impressive. Instead of guessing correctly 20% of the time, as predicted by probability, Pearce guessed at a rate of almost *double* that, or nearly 40%. Moreover, he accomplished that over the course of 7,500 guesses! The Rhines then asked a logical, but daring, question: could ESP be demonstrated over an even greater distance? Pearce had been located at the library, about one hundred yards from Pratt. The Rhines decided to move the two men farther apart and repeat the experiment. As we learn from Mayer:

> [Pearce] achieved similarly impressive results when he moved from the library to the medical school, 250 yards away from Pratt

> instead of just 100. Apparently, distance didn't affect Pearce's abilities.

Then something *truly* remarkable occurred. This happened when the Rhines decided to change gears completely by getting Pearce to guess the cards *before* Pratt had even shuffled his deck. Was this even possible? They were about to find out. Again, two lists were created and then compared. *The results were the same as before*. Mayer comments:

> Pearce's abilities appeared no more constrained by time than by distance. By the time the Pearce-Pratt experiments were completed, the two men had conducted 1,850 trials out of which Pearce had achieved 558 hits. Pure chance would have predicted he'd accurately guess 370. The odds of Pearce making 558 correct guesses out of 1,850 were an inconceivable 22 billion to 1.

In relatively short order, the Rhines were able to clearly demonstrate, in test after test involving thousands of guesses by hundreds of subjects, that the general populace was at least mildly telepathic, and that some individuals, like Pearce, had ESP abilities that were far greater than average.

But then came disappointment.

After their experiments had gone on for some time, something happened that was both curious and frustrating: the rate of correct guesses began to drop back down to chance levels. This *decline effect* (as it became known) surprised everyone on the Rhine research team, but it also led to a couple of important realizations. First, the laboratory setting of the tests, with its constant repetition, was simply too boring for the human mind, which requires motivation and at least a certain level of excitement to remain engaged with whatever it's doing. It's important to note here that this wasn't a case of a test subject going through a few decks of cards and making guesses. If the sample size had been that small, critics could be justified at objecting that the spike in correct guesses was simply due to luck. On the

contrary, this was a case of test subjects going through *hundreds* of decks of cards and making guesses, one after another after another. It's obvious to us now that this degree of repetition constitutes, to a normal human mind, pure drudgery. Human beings are not robots who can perform menial tasks like flipping cards (or burgers) from now till Kingdom Come—not without losing their focus, anyway. After a while, they just tune out, and so does their ESP ability. A bit of cerebral or emotional juice is needed to stay fresh and continue to play the game.

The second factor is closely related to the first. The human mind being what it is—a complex entity that tends to fill itself with mental garbage—it begins to automate certain tasks once they become repetitive. Watch the same movie a hundred times, and you'll stop seeing most of it: the scenes will just glide by, and you'll likely only catch bits and pieces. Eat the same chocolate cake day after day, year after year, decade after decade, and it'll soon stop being quite as delicious as it was the first time. We all know this: there can never be anything like the first time, whether it's your first love or your first visit to a new country. So here the Rhines were, shoving their test subjects into a situation where boredom was inevitable. There was just too much chocolate cake. Their subjects' brains had become Swiss cheese after seeing so many Zener cards. They had seen so many that each symbol was imprinted indelibly on their minds. It's hard to imagine the result as being anything *but* ESP shutdown.

Test subjects, no matter how gifted, are still human beings with minds that are sensitive to their surroundings. Forcing them to guess pictures (or, as in other ESP experiments, roll dice) thousands of times over an extended period in a clinical setting is enough to give half the populace a one-way ticket to the loony bin. It's worse than sitting in a dentist's waiting room with the sound of whirring drills in the background; that, at least, would give you an adrenaline rush. The cold, hard truth of the matter is that labs aren't the best places to test human abilities: anyone but the biggest geek knows that. Who, other than a lab rat, is comfortable in a lab?

It's not that such experiments are without value, however. Yes, it's significant if, say, a thousand subjects guess at a rate of 25% when

probability dictates it should only be 20%, but the results aren't quite as sexy as one might like, or as bulletproof. It proves that humans are vaguely telepathic; other than the most hardened cynic, most people think that already.

The existence of the decline effect shouldn't surprise anyone: it should surprise us if it *didn't* exist, at least under the conditions we've described. Russell Targ, whom we met previously in connection to the CIA's remote viewing program, closely examined the experimentation undertaken by the Rhines. Here's what he had to say about the decline effect:

> [It] did not invalidate their previous highly significant data, but it was very disappointing to the researchers…. It was as though [they] had found a highly creative way to demonstrate ESP in the lab and then extinguish it![49]

As Targ and other parapsychologists discovered, the twin factors of boredom and the "mental noise" caused by seeing the same images too often were to blame. Subjects simply had trouble distinguishing between *incoming* psi messages and the mental detritus *already* floating around in their heads. As Targ remarked:

> It would be nice if genuine psychic images carried a tag that said, "This image is brought to you by ESP"; but, alas, that is not the case. One can only learn by practice to discern psychically derived images from mental noise.

There is another factor involved in the decline effect, and that's the nature of psi itself. As researchers have discovered, psi is a peculiarly elusive entity, an ability that is both there and not there, tantalizingly powerful, yet frustratingly slippery. The decline effect is a perfect example: someone might come in for a series of tests and shock researchers by guessing correctly at an unbelievably high rate, say 80% or 90%, and then have difficulty guessing above chance levels for the next test. They've guessed

correctly far too many times to be dismissed as merely lucky, but then the cliff appears, and their performance takes a running leap right off its edge. Yes, boredom and mental noise can account for *some* of the drop, but we suspect there's something else at play here too, and that something goes to the heart of the whole phenomena of psychic activity itself.

What this third factor is becomes clear if we step back and consider the bigger picture for a moment. When we talk about psi, what, exactly, are we dealing with? Well, it's clear that psi is not a mere chemical or electrical force that can be bottled or harnessed or placed in a neat little package. If it were that simple, it would've been done decades ago, and you would have already seen psi in every supermarket in America. Psi is not a substance. Nor is psi like electricity, which can be conducted through wires and sent into every home. We contend that *psi is the human mind itself, operating at a higher level than its normal state of awareness*—in a nutshell, it is Gödel's superconsciousness, *a state of mind in which one mind is linked to many*. When you "plug" into psi, you plug into the collective unconscious. What we are talking about when we talk about psi is essentially the same thing that Heisenberg was talking about when he declared that there is only one mind in the entire universe. It is a state of connectivity between *seemingly* isolated individual minds, or, in the case of telekinesis, it is a state of connectivity between mind and matter.

But think about this for a moment. If, because of psi, your mind *could* operate at a much higher level, even for an instant, granting you a God-like perspective, would you be eager to grant everyone in the world that self-same power? Do you really believe everyone is ready for their own personal genie in a bottle, regardless of their emotional or psychological development? In other words, would you, in your wisdom, allow human beings to fully exploit such tremendous power in any way they sought fit? Before you leap in with your answer, we ask you to take a quick tour through history. You don't have to go right back to the beginning. That's not necessary. Just glance at the last five or six centuries. Heck, just glance at the last five or six *decades*. As the years whirl by your mind's eye, let this question roll around in your consciousness. Into the mental whirlwind that

is now your super-intelligent, God-like mind (remember, thanks to psi, you now have God-like power; you're a full-blown genius), throw in the words Nazism, Death Squad, Big Brother, Cold War, My Lai Massacre, the Killing Fields and Stalin's Gulags. Let things stew for a bit and then see how you answer our question. For fun, let's express it another way: *Do you really think a superpower like psi would allow itself to be bottled, harnessed and fully exploited by humanity as humanity exists today?*

You see, psi is not a substance like asbestos or plutonium, something you can just stick into a test tube or an instrument. And that's a good thing. Can you imagine what our world would be like if a scientist at Harvard or Oxford (or Moscow State University) had figured out how to put it into a pill or syringe? Despite their best intentions, human beings have something called human nature. Thanks to it, there are a million ways for things to go sideways. And that's at the *best* of times. When it comes to controlling powerful weapons, it's a gross understatement of the first order to say that we don't have the best conceivable track record. Almost certainly the national security state (of one country or another) would intervene for the so-called greater good, and the Pandora's Box to end all Pandora's Boxes would be opened. If you honestly believe humanity as a whole is ready to have that type of power at its fingertips—the power of clairvoyance, telepathy, prophecy and telekinesis, all operating at 100% of capacity, with no decline effect to slow it down—you've been reading from a very different history book than we have. Would you like Charles Manson, Adolf Hitler or Donald Trump to control such a power? No? We thought not. So tell us: *Do you really think psi is so stupid that it hasn't figured that out for itself?*

It's one thing to have such powers—in their full-blown version—surface here and there in isolated individuals. Sure, the Pentagon has had a certain amount of success with its remote viewing programs; the same goes for programs in Russia and China (and, in all likelihood, India). But every known laboratory demonstration of psi is either subject to the decline effect or meets up with some other type of limitation. As far as we know, no psychics have ever scored 100% on tests of their accuracy (that would be

the psi equivalent of a sprinter running the three-minute mile or a golfer getting a dozen successive holes in one). So yes, it's one thing to flirt with psi power, as many, if not all of us, do; it's quite another to have psi superpowers become as common as electric lighting and home computers.

To summarize: psi is a component of our own consciousness (or at least connected to it somehow), but from all appearances, it's much smarter, wiser, and more mature than we are when we are operating in our "normal," everyday state of awareness. Perhaps some day civilization's maturity level will rise up a notch or two, and then we will suddenly discover that psi has ceased to be so elusive: then we'll be given more of it, and no doubt some of us will abuse it. Like everything else, psi is subject to free will. But for now, at least, it appears to also be subject to an overall ceiling of availability—a type of "psi cap," if you will. It will therefore remain a tantalizing, if somewhat maddening, power that likes to operate behind the scenes, in relatively rare instances, through relatively rare individuals, and which most of us can only glimpse here and there, and from time to time. Ordinary individuals may have a few precognitive dreams; the rest of their dreams will just be ordinary. Einstein, Kekule and other scientists had dreams that changed the world, but they didn't have them every day or on command. And thank God they didn't, for can you imagine what the world would be like if devices even more destructive than atomic weapons and fuel-air explosives were to suddenly come into existence, thanks to an untimely psi-related dream? Human beings would obviously like to have psi on tap at their local pub, bar or restaurant, but does anyone actually believe humanity is ready for a time when psychic ability is as freely available as beer and cider?

As things stand today, the only reasonable conclusion one can draw after reviewing the evidence is that psi power *does* exist, but, as far as the vast majority of human beings are concerned, only in tiny amounts or as untapped potential waiting to be developed (the question of how to do so will be discussed later in this book).

With psi, there seems to be a continuum at work. On one end of the continuum are low-level, run-of-the-mill psi events. Example of this include

experiences most of us have had, if only occasionally: gut feelings that turn out to be true; once-in-a-lifetime sporting performances in which we are "in the flow" and "somehow know" exactly how to defeat our opponents; precognitive dreams that show us shards of a dimly perceived future.[50] In the case of the latter, though they are relatively rare, such dreams are so widely recorded throughout history that it would be foolish to dismiss them. If the large-scale public surveys done by the Rhines, the Society for Psychical Research and (as we will see later) Japanese researchers are any indication, events on this end of the continuum seem to be so widely distributed throughout the human population that one is tempted to call them examples of "ordinary psi."

On the other end of the continuum are high-level psi events, such as verifiable information gained through remote viewing and demonstrations of telekinesis by high-level martial artists and people like Swami Rama. These types of events—let's call them "extraordinary psi"—occur with regularity when it comes to the psychics and mystics we will meet throughout this book. For them, clairvoyant dreams, waking visions and "data downloads" from indeterminate sources occur with considerable frequency and include information with a high degree of accuracy. But as far as we know, this level of psi power exists only for a small minority of human beings. And only among a very small subset of that little group does it truly flower into a superpower.

Given the number of times scientists have poked and prodded this latter, ultra-small group, it's no wonder most of its members aren't rushing into the limelight and demanding to be discovered. Why would they? Others have done so in the past, with little to no effect on the scientific community at large. The deniers are still in denial, and likely always will be, regardless of what they are shown. In today's anti-psi climate, which bears no little resemblance to the witch hunts of the Dark Ages, *no* amount of evidence will convince the skeptics, many of whom have a vested interest in *not* being convinced. Luckily for us, the patriarchal power structures within Big Science and Big Religion that have worked so diligently to suppress psi practitioners haven't always been successful. Despite their best efforts,

some of those born with the psi gift have actually lived to see it bloom into an ability that impressed everyone they encountered. And although the list of such people is unfortunately an exceedingly short one, the people we're going to introduce to you over the course of the next several chapters occupied positions right at the very top.

VI

The Extraordinary Case of Eileen Garrett

Like everything else in my mediumship, I discovered the existence of the aura by accident. Within a mood of reverie, I found myself standing several yards away from my physical self, regarding the exquisite cocoon of colors in which I could observe my own body breathing.[51]

—Eileen Garrett

The importance of distinguishing an incoming psi signal from one's own internal mental chatter—separating psychic wheat from chaff—has long been recognized in those circles where the term "psychic ability" does not make people instantly gag. Eileen Garrett, one of the most accomplished psychic mediums of all time, was well aware of this. Born in Ireland in 1896, Garrett grew up in a country whose people hadn't been so thoroughly Christianized as to completely forget their more mystical, pagan roots: instead, Christian and pagan ideas co-existed, sometimes in uneasy ways. She credited this lingering element of pre-Christian thinking—such as widespread belief in benign psychic ability and a mystical orientation toward Nature—as being a key influence in her life. It was almost as if she grew up in a place where two visions of the world had collided: on one side was the worldview of the Catholic Church, whose battles against sorcerers and witches were the stuff of legend, and on the other was a fragmentary, but still living, paganism inherited from the Celts and Vikings, whose battles against the Church were equally legendary. Looked at in this way, it is not at all surprising that a country teetering on the edge of Europe and lodged between a Christian rock and a pagan hard place might harbor

slightly unorthodox opinions about the supernatural. It is also unsurprising that a young *sensitive* like Garrett would be able to exploit the small degree of mental freedom this afforded her, and open herself up to possibilities that might otherwise have been unthinkable.

It is not too much of an aside to note that the Church has always had a love-hate and, dare we say, unchristian relationship with psychic phenomena: which is to say that whenever the Church fathers weren't approving of it wholeheartedly, they were suppressing it mercilessly. When they took the latter approach, which was often, they would persecute psi practitioners in the most gleefully brutal fashion imaginable (if there's any doubt about this, just ask any 16th century witch or sorcerer, or better yet, stick "auto-da-fé" into the search engine of your choice). In Biblical times, any prophet worth his salt was capable of stellar feats of precognition, but as far as the masses were concerned, precognition came under the category of the fruit that is most definitely forbidden. *Do as I say*, in other words, *not as I do*. Sorcery, too, was all well and good—unless it was used by a rival religion, in which case it instantly transformed itself into a Dark Power. A psi superpower is kosher if it's deployed by an Apostle such as Paul, who used his to blind a competitor by the name of Bar-Jesus, but not if it's deployed by Bar-Jesus himself, whom the Bible variously maligned as a magus, sorcerer, false prophet *and* part-time advisor to a Roman overlord (since the dawn of time, artistic types have always been forced to hold down more than one job at a time). When used by the Church's prophets (who, it goes without saying, practiced *prophecy,* obviously a psi ability), divination is a gift from the Holy Spirit; when practiced by pagans or women, it is a gift from His Satanic Majesty. Hypocrisy, thy name is religion. And such hypocrisy goes a long way toward explaining the historical origins of the frenzied emotional stigma that still remains attached to psi and its protectors in our own day. Things in Garrett's Ireland, however, were different: or at least different *enough*. In the land of fairies and banshees, leprechauns and druids, pagan beliefs could still be found flowing hither and thither through valley and vicar, shaping the hoi polloi in ways that might not be *quite* as acceptable in places where the flashing

swords of brawny Christians had already sent all that heathen Celtic blood flowing unceremoniously back into the womb of Gaia.

Another factor should also not be underestimated, as it helped mold Garrett's life in a fundamental way. This was the readiness of the Irish to accept death as an intimate part of life—a doorway between the worlds, you might say—and not as a source of unbridled horror (i.e., the North American approach). When someone dies in Ireland, it's a time for hand holding, beer drinking and memorializing. Death can bring the whole community together for days of festive joy. When someone dies in America, it's nothing more than a visit from the Grim Reaper followed by weeks of dreariness, dread and despair.

From Garrett's point of view, the abovementioned factors aided her development as a medium. You cannot, of course, hold pleasing conversations with the dead if the mere idea of them puts you into a paralytic stupor. Her cultural background therefore opened her up to *potentialities* that would have simply gone unrecognized and undeveloped in most others. As far as her psychic ability is concerned—especially her ability to communicate with those formerly among the living—for the time being, we would ask readers to suspend their disbelief and merely listen to her story as it unfolds, without rushing to judgment; we will address that and related issues one by one, in the fullness of time, and everyone can reach their own conclusions, once all the evidence is in. For now, let's just listen to what she and those who knew her had to say without leaping off intellectual bridges or otherwise jumping to conclusions about whether she was a fraud, troubled soul or, perhaps, just someone blessed (or cursed) with an unusual superpower. (But be forewarned: part of the following exercise at open-mindedness will involve stretching our understanding of the *possible* in ways that may, at times, seem threatening to 21st century belief systems. Atheists are advised to pop a valium, breathe deeply and stick their heads between their knees.)

Even as a child, Garrett was aware that she was wired differently from others. In her memoirs she recounts correctly guessing the contents of a friend's unopened letter (it was from his late father) and, while attending a

séance, suddenly being able to see the dead relatives of mourners. Also from an early age, she noticed something highly unusual about her fellow human beings. She saw them:

> Not merely as physical bodies, but as if each were set within a nebulous egg-shaped covering of his own. This *surround,* as I called it for want of a better name, consisted of transparent changing colors, or could become dense and heavy in character—for these coverings changed according to the variations in people's moods.[52]

To better understand—and control—these nascent psychic abilities, she sought expert help. Fortunately for her, at that particular time such assistance was not in short supply in the British Isles, which for the previous fifty or so years had been at the very epicenter of an explosion of interest—on the part of both scientists and lay people—in psi phenomena. She ended up going to South Kensington, London, where the College of Psychic Science had just begun operations. It turned out to be the perfect place for her to seek advice: the college was swiftly becoming one of the key engines of the global Spiritualist movement, as evidenced by the fact that its house-warming party in 1926 was attended by no less a celebrity than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In addition to writing the Sherlock Holmes mysteries, Doyle was also president of the London Spiritualist Alliance and one of many famous figures, including highly accomplished scientists, associated with the Spiritualist and psychic studies movement.

When Garrett arrived at the college, she was placed in the hands of Edinburgh-born psychologist James Hewat McKenzie and his wife, Barbara, a Quaker. Both were avowed Spiritualists who believed in the ability of the living—at least *some* of the living—to communicate with those no longer on the physical plane. As for their approach to mediumship, they stressed the importance of maintaining a sense of detached engagement, both when it came to dealing with bereaved relatives who wanted to use the services of a medium to contact dead relatives, *and* when

it came to dealing with the dead relatives themselves when they showed up at a séance or sitting. It was essential, the McKenzies believed, for a medium such as Garrett to learn how to maintain a state of perfect inner tranquility in order to function as a type of blank slate upon which any communication from the "other side" could be written.[53] This was one of the ways in which they dealt with what we call the "psi signal problem," the cerebral sorting issue we encountered earlier in connection with Zener cards and ESP testing. Though they didn't call it that (the term *psi* wasn't coined until two decades later), the challenge of separating incoming information from the medium's own mental activity was well known in Spiritualist circles. The cultivation of inner tranquility brought with it more than just a clear signal, free from mental flotsam and jetsam, however: it was believed to also help the signal to arrive in the first place. Were the medium in question to allow herself to be swayed by the extremely strong emotions of the living *or* the dead, it was believed that communication would break down and the connection between worlds would collapse. This is why training of the mind was thought to be essential to the entire enterprise of mediumship (and probably why psychosis in untrained wannabe mediums is a real possibility).

Not only was such training required for the medium; it was *also* required for so-called spirit guides (a.k.a. *controls*) who would help facilitate contact between the medium and the larger world of spirit. While this point sometimes surprises those unfamiliar with the beliefs of the Spiritualist movement, it follows quite logically from their views. From their perspective, the residents of the world beyond this one are not all-knowing, perfect beings with an unlimited amount of knowledge at their fingertips. If only. Spiritualists are of the belief that all intelligent forms of life, whether they inhabit this plane or another, are constantly evolving: and by definition evolution implies imperfection and limitation. (Otherwise, why evolve at all?). However disappointing this may be for some to learn, death doesn't grant instant omniscience. You don't become God just by croaking. And that's why even spirit controls (sometimes referred to as *intelligences*) occasionally need tutoring. McKenzie and other early Spiritualists quickly

discovered that if spirit controls were left to their own devices, they tended to speak in such flowery or outdated language that clear communication was next to impossible. Sometimes the end result would so mystify the humans trying to understand it that it made them feel like children trying to decipher Shakespeare. That obviously wouldn't do.

Now, it is here that we should pause and unpack a few things. It has been pointed out many times—even by Garrett herself—that she sometimes doubted whether she *was* in contact with spirits, or that she had any such thing as a "spirit control." Instead, she sometimes viewed her guides—which she could, at times, actually see with her own eyes—as projections of her own subconscious. She treated them with a healthy amount of respect, for in her view they were just as real as she was, but she had no way of verifying, *without a doubt*, that they were who they said they were, i.e., spirits. And this is where things get truly interesting: for although she had her doubts about the *source* of the information she received, she had no doubt that it was *genuine information* that had not come to her through the normal operation of the five senses. While at first that may seem contradictory, if you look a little closer, you will see that it is not. It is not necessary to believe in the spirit world in order to believe in ESP: while the two things are often considered connected, it's quite possible to believe in one without the other. Many in fact do. The question of survival beyond death (sometimes referred to as the *survival hypothesis*) is separate and distinct from the ESP issue; and it was quite possible, even logical, for a psychic like Garrett to have doubts. After all, even Christ had doubts, did he not? Reflecting on this issue, Lisette Coly, Garrett's granddaughter, once observed:

> Despite often having access to seemingly unworldly information produced in a manner that seemed to support the survival hypothesis, she was troubled not by the validity of the information she accessed, *but by a lack of understanding of its source*. Her well-known statement illustrating her indecision sums up her life-long quandary: "On Monday, Wednesday, Friday I believe in the

paranormal, and on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, I don't. On Sunday, I don't give a damn!"[54]

Garrett's vacillation between belief and skepticism is completely understandable. Put yourself in her shoes. She sees and hears entities that seem to possess personalities entirely different from her own. These entities provide her information that usually proves to be correct. Part of her believes they are spirit guides; part of her believes they are products of her own subconscious. She vacillates back and forth. Which is she to believe? The Spiritualist would likely tell her they are spirits; the materialist or skeptic would likely say they are concoctions of mind; being pragmatists, most parapsychologists would reserve judgment and attempt to verify the information. When she herself asked her spirit guides which of the two they were—spirit or subconscious creation—they gave her an intriguing reply.

They said they were *both*.

This by itself doesn't rule out either the materialist or Spiritualist point of view on this issue, but it *might* suggest that they functioned as a *mutually created living link* between the two worlds, one deliberately created by *both* sides in order to ensure the smooth transfer of information. Analogies aren't hard to find. Sweden starts building a bridge from one side, Denmark does the same from the other, and before you know it, you've got a link between two countries. In this case, replace "countries" with "dimensions" and Bob's your uncle. To a Spiritualist—or Jungian—we are all connected to a wider sea of knowledge: the latter call it the collective unconscious and the former calls it the world beyond this one. For all we know, it might make perfect sense for the medium's subconscious mind to create "separate" personalities in order to deal with the complexities involved in communicating between dimensions.

After all, who are we to say?

As for Garrett's ability to produce verifiable information through ESP, it's hard to see why that should be questioned except out of an overdose of naysaying and knee-jerk reactionary thinking. The American psychologist Lawrence LeShan furnishes us with one of many examples. While doing

research with Garrett, he was contacted by an acquaintance whose husband, a physician, had disappeared. The missing man's wife wanted to know if Garrett could help locate him; the woman helpfully supplied a piece of cloth from the missing man's suit. After being given the cloth and informed of the situation, Garrett entered into a trance state and promptly gave LeShan the following information:

> He is in La Jolla. He went there due to a psychic wound he suffered when he was fourteen years old and his father disappeared.[55]

That evening LeShan telephoned the man's wife and asked whether anything had happened to her husband between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. She told him her husband's father had deserted the family when her husband was fourteen and was not heard from again for 25 years. LeShan added:

> Three weeks later, when the physician was located, it turned out he had been in La Jolla.

So Garrett was capable of finding a missing person halfway across the country, using only the trance state and a piece of cloth as her tools: as far as proving psychic ability is concerned, that, to us, is worth far more than a thousand people fiddling around with Zener cards in a lab. And as we shall see, she and other psychics have done this again and again. Her case is important for many reasons, for not only did she repeatedly pass the tests put forward by multiple investigators, she was also very open—and in fact public—about her experiences as a psychic. Her autobiographies (she wrote two) provide a fascinating window into the life of one of history's most talented psi practitioners—and perhaps even a few clues about the nature of psi itself. She was very upfront about the emotional turmoil and self-doubt she endured as a consequence of her public life as a medium and as someone who lived through a tumultuous era. Born with highly

controversial skills, the daughter of parents who committed suicide, the wife of two husbands who died of war wounds, she led a rollercoaster life in a rollercoaster world of war and socioeconomic upheaval—and yet, despite all the challenges facing her, she *voluntarily* submitted to test after test by scientists and psychologists, all because of her inner drive to understand her strange gift.

She also didn't always pass muster when it came to those tests—not from *her* perspective, as she clearly had high standards for herself. Tested by the Rhines, she scored well above chance. It was enough to impress them, but not her: a perfectionist, she blamed herself for not getting a perfect score. In reality, it's unquestionable (at least as far as reasonable observers are concerned) that she demonstrated the existence of ESP under laboratory conditions. Her performance was nevertheless criticized by skeptics who, ignoring the evidence as usual, claimed that (a) the results were not above chance; and (b) the methodology was flawed. But the critics overreached, as zealots always do. Dean Radin examined the methodology employed by the Rhines and reached the following conclusion:

> J. B. Rhine's ESP experiments involved the use of card decks with five symbols, so the probability of a correct guess was 1 in 5 or 0.2. That means with 10,900 cards guessed, the expected number of correct guesses was 2,180… Garrett's 2,433 [correct] hits…was astoundingly good and did support the idea of providing "clairvoyance to order."[56]

Garrett's test alone involved *thousands* of guesses. Put yourself in her position and imagine the sheer repetition involved. Imagine sitting at a table and guessing what is on the back of a card time after time after time, again and again and again, ad nauseam. It is the very definition of mind-numbing activity. Frankly, it's surprising she scored as high as she did. But even though she voluntarily submitted to such laboratory tests, she herself thought they lacked an essential *vitality,* without which psi had little or no pressing reason to operate. On reflection, this criticism makes perfect sense.

To her and many other psi practitioners, psi is not merely an ability like juggling or cycling, to be turned on and off at will or on a lark, but a sacred power that turns *itself* on and off when there's a vital and profound need, as well as a suitable vessel (in this case, Garrett herself) to funnel it in a useful way. It is certainly not meant to be an entertaining parlor trick or even something whose purpose is to satisfy intellectual curiosity. In their eyes, it has *divine purpose*.

Could it be that we have simply forgotten what that means?

VII

In Praise of Anecdote

Without witnesses, truth perishes

> *The greatest men who have been philosophers have felt the need both of science and of mysticism: the attempt to harmonize the two was what made their life [and] philosophy…a greater thing than either science or religion.*
>
> —Bertrand Russell[57]

If the history of psi research teaches us anything at all, it's that psi is not chiefly designed to be used just for the sake of it. It's designed almost expressly for crisis situations, when other modes of communication or knowledge acquisition are unavailable. Sure, you can hook someone up to wires in a lab and make them play guessing games a few thousand times, with mixed results, but that's really a sideshow, and we already know how that turns out in the end. The main event, as far as psi is concerned, usually involves human crisis. Someone is dead, MIA, having an emotional breakdown, or clinging to life and needs help, and *then* a major psi event occurs. An SOS signal is sent out into the human ether, or the equivalent of an obituary is posted via the mind's spiritual Wi-Fi network. At that moment, the invisible walls that normally separate human beings suddenly topple, pushed over by the magnitude of the psi message. That message may take the form of a fleeting vision, a sudden knowing, or even a full-fledged, life-like apparition of the dying/dead/endangered person in question, but the "glue" that connects all of these manifestations of psi can be expressed in a single word: *crisis*. An entire category of psi phenomena was labeled "crisis apparitions" for this very reason (indeed, that was the subject of the major SPR study we looked at earlier). Think of it like this:

crisis prompts an outpouring of psychic energy, and the result is a monster transmission. It's like you're suddenly tuning into the Psychic TV network, but instead of it being powered by electricity, the animating energy is generated by the human soul.

If you wish for examples (and we know you do), look at warfare: during times of war psi events are as common as muck on a First World War battlefield. In fact, during both the First and Second World Wars, eyewitnesses regularly reported seeing dead or dying soldiers in places where they really had no right to be. People repeatedly saw dead RAF pilots walking around *as if alive*. One famous incident from WWI was reported in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*. In that case, Lieutenant J.J. Larkin was quietly reading in his room at the RAF barracks one afternoon when he saw a fellow officer, Lieutenant David M'Connel, at his door. Larkin knew M'Connel had been scheduled to go out flying that day, so at first he thought his friend had just returned early. As Larkin explained:

> The door opened with the usual noise and clatter which David always made; I heard his 'Hello boy!' and I turned half round in my chair and saw him standing in the doorway, half in and half out of the room, holding the door knob in his hand. He was dressed in his full flying clothes, but wearing his naval cap.[58]

The two men had a brief conversation, and then his visitor said goodbye and closed the door. Another pilot then dropped in, and Larkin told him of M'Connel's visit. It was only later in the day that Larkin learned that M'Connel had actually been killed in a flying accident *before* his conversation with Larkin. This incident certainly qualifies as a "crisis apparition": one can only presume that M'Connel was trying to reach out to someone close to him after his death; it's unsurprising that the person who received his message was someone with whom he was closely connected—and who was in a quiet, meditative state at the moment of M'Connel's death.

Dead men strolling around, having chats, and opening and closing doors? Might not happen every day during peacetime, but in war, apparently it's not that uncommon—at least if a long list of credible eyewitnesses are to be believed. Though we could cite thousands of similar incidents, for the purpose of brevity we'll confine ourselves to just one more for now. Reported in F.W.H. Myers' book, *Human Personality*, it involved an apparition of someone called Captain Towns, who died in Australia in 1873. One day about six weeks after his death, his daughter, accompanied by a friend, entered a bedroom in the house where he had passed away. They were more than a little surprised to see his image reflected on the polished surface of a wardrobe.

> It was barely half a figure, the head, shoulders, and part of the arms only showing—in fact, it was like an ordinary medallion portrait, but life-size. The face appeared wan and pale, as it did before his death, and he wore a kind of grey flannel jacket, in which he had been accustomed to sleep.

While they were looking at the apparition, one of Towns' other daughters entered the room. Before the first daughter or her companion had time to speak, the second daughter exclaimed: "Good Gracious! Do you see papa?" One of the housemaids was called in and asked if she could see anything unusual. Without any coaching, she said that she, too, could see Captain Towns. The same response was given by another servant. And by the butler. *And* by a nurse. Finally, after the apparition had been independently identified by no fewer than *seven* people, the widow of the late captain was called in. She too saw what the others had seen.

> Seeing the apparition, she advanced towards it with her arm extended as if to touch it, and as she passed her hand over the panel of the wardrobe, the figure gradually faded away, and never again appeared, though the room was regularly occupied for a long time after.[59]

In such cases, psi surfaces in its fullest form because it has a *deep emotional reason* to do so. Does a lab test really qualify? Perhaps instead of treating psi as a straightforward ability like swimming or butt-scratching, which can be demonstrated on command, we should respect the possibility that perhaps there's something a bit more to it than that—perhaps something sacred—and, for that reason, should adjust our expectations accordingly. Should we be surprised when psi doesn't ask "how high?" every time we command it to jump?

Perhaps those who have been busy studying psi all these years have been guilty of wanting to reduce it to just another quantifiable, predictable, law-governed entity like the elements on the periodic table. But is that what psi truly is? Is that even what consciousness is?

None of this is to say we should abandon the laboratory approach; if we want to understand anything as important as this, all avenues should remain open. But it's clear (at least to us) that the psi activity that really matters, that really has the capacity to change lives and alter perspectives, is the activity that occurs *outside* the lab, in the "wild" of everyday human relationships and situations. According to most who have reported an authentic psi event, it shook them to the core. Perhaps that is one of the purposes of such events in the first place: *to push us outside ourselves and show us a new way of thinking*. That this is personal and subjective shouldn't be held against it, or used to dismiss it as phenomena. There have been thousands upon thousands of such incidents recorded by investigators over the past couple hundred years, and it's high time we took them seriously, for they constitute an important source of information that we can ignore only at the cost of our understanding. And why *shouldn't* we take such testimony seriously? If the swami we met earlier—you know, the guy who could make a compass move with his mind?—sat down with you and told you the contents of your mind, you would be a rare individual indeed if you doubted him. *That* is psi operating in the wild. If Eileen Garrett sat down with you and told you about a dead loved one, describing him or her accurately and including information no one but you (and your dead

relative) knew, how could you not be impressed? That, too, is psi operating in the wild. It beggars belief how such incidents can be rejected as evidence. Only the most elitist and arrogant of cultures would be capable of such myopic hubris. And if you look a little more closely at the supposed arguments for rejecting such testimony, you can begin to see how flawed they are.

The chief objection against eyewitness reports about psychic activity, and the one constantly offered by skeptics, is that such reports are, at bottom, *anecdotal*. Well, duh. Of course they're anecdotal. That's what testimony is: anecdote. The thing is, if you look at what passes for knowledge in our civilization, much of it *is* anecdotal in nature. Most of our knowledge of history, for instance, is anecdotal, buttressed to a greater or lesser (usually lesser) degree by archeological evidence that is highly fragmentary and interpretative; just to understand its significance, we need to rely on the arguments and *testimony* of so-called experts—i.e., more anecdotes.

A simple example illustrates this nicely. We say, with confidence, that the Second World War was fought between 1939 and 1945. It's easy to prove that—but *not* without relying on anecdotal information. Shall you pull out an encyclopedia? It's brimming with anecdotal information. Shall you drag a veteran out of the nearest Legion and subject him to interrogation? The result, alas, would be anecdotal. And when you complain to the police after he punches you in the noggin for questioning what to him is a blatantly obvious fact, your complaint, too, would be anecdotal. What to do, what to do? How about pulling out a photo album and showing us a picture of your Uncle Bob, who everyone *says* was shot down over Germany? Ah, prove that he *was* shot down over Germany without relying on the *word* of someone, somewhere, whether in book form or in the form of verbal testimony. Is that *really* Uncle Bob in that photo? Did he *really* fly that plane? Let the anecdotes fly! Moreover, everything you can bring to bear on this question is either easily fabricated or subject to memory (which is, as everyone agrees, fallible). Eyewitness accounts, by definition, are anecdotal, and their quality varies greatly according to the value judgments we assign to the credibility of the witnesses in question. But here's the rub.

That doesn't make anecdotal evidence useless. Personally, we believe that WWII was fought between the dates mentioned above, and we're happy to base that belief on anecdote. Anecdote ain't gonna get chucked out by our civilization any time soon. We've been using it for as long as humans have been capable of speech. We recognize anecdotal evidence as being, at times, questionable or weaker than the ideal; but we *don't* toss it out the window. Anecdote is a key foundation of human knowledge. That little fact can't be airbrushed out of our discussion of psi like the age spots on a middle-aged celebrity's magazine photograph.

Let's take another example. The authors of this book believe Neil Armstrong and his fellow astronauts made it to the Moon, but if you're determined to be skeptical about it, I'm afraid there's no way we can prove it to you—not beyond the shadow of a doubt, and not without eyewitness testimony. All the things that we could trot out would still be open to question, but the key question, in our minds, is *whether reasonable people would doubt it*. It's not a perfect measure of truth, but it's still a good one: and as the old saying goes, it's an error to make the perfect the enemy of the good. The truth of the matter is that history, as we know it, is 70% anecdotal evidence, 10% physical evidence (meaning artifacts and other items susceptible to fraud and misinterpretation) and 20% pure faith in the people who are telling the story.

Nevertheless, our civilization *needs* history. We need testimony; we need anecdote. And we value it highly, despite its weaknesses. On the basis of anecdote, you, dear reader, can be sent to prison. On the basis of anecdote, whole governments have crumbled into dust. Richard Nixon was brought down by anecdote—largely in the form of the testimony of one man, John Dean, but also in the form of taped conversations the US president had with important figures in his administration, along with all that anecdotal stuff Bernstein and Woodward were cramming into the daily papers.

Whether you refer to it as anecdote or by a more elevated term, such as testimony, it's clear the personal accounts of human beings play a huge role in our lives. The fact that something is anecdotal, then, does not mean it's without value. In fact, it's precisely the opposite: anecdotal information *is*

valuable. It is the source of most of what human beings know about themselves and their past, and there's no way of getting around that without jumping into Dr. Who's time machine and traveling to each historical event to personally confirm what happened (even then, your reports would be anecdotes). Of course, we all want 100% law-like certainty about everything under the Sun, but until such happy days arrive, we will continue to rely on the imperfect testimony of people both past and present to learn about our history—otherwise, we are certain to miss out on a great deal of profound knowledge.

There are reasons, of course, that scientists prefer to observe their objects of study in a lab: much can be learned about the behavior of chemicals and cells when they are boiled in beakers or scrutinized under laboratory conditions. But psi is not quite so obedient as droplets of mercury or blood samples, for by definition it depends on the unpredictable activity of the human mind. To understand it, a laboratory is insufficient. To really *get* psi you have to travel outside the artificial confines of the lab and venture into the human jungle to collect specimens—and those specimens will inevitably take the form of personal accounts about the paranormal. This does not mean, as we shall see, that there is no way of evaluating their truthfulness; truth does not solely depend on our being able to pour something into a beaker and light it on fire. Although many psychics have indeed been tested in a lab setting (we've already met one; we'll meet several more later on), as we've argued already, in order to *truly* get a handle on what they do, we need to go to where they have operated over the last several millennia: the wild. So let's don our jungle gear and keep our extra-strength butterfly nets close at hand just in case we spot something interesting to bring back home, and head back into the human wilderness in search of the elusive psi. And let's remember, too, that the best weapon we can take with us on our epic journey into the annals of psychic phenomena is the one thing we can all afford, regardless of how rich or poor we happen to be.

And that's an open mind.

VIII

Genies, Geniuses & Gods

If we compare how great scientific ideas arrive,
they look remarkably like religious revelation…
It is clear that they do not usually come from
the so-called scientific method.

—Physicist Charles Townes

The testing of psychics is nothing new. In fact, it goes back all the way to ancient times. The Greek historian Herodotus reports that in 550 BCE, King Croesus of Lydia, an Ionian kingdom in what is now western Turkey, created one of the first known tests of psychic ability—and it was a pretty effective one. As it happens, Croesus seems to have been a bit psychic himself: he had once had a vivid dream in which the Gods had warned him that his son Atys would die from being struck by an iron spear. Startled awake, he immediately set about doing everything in his power to prevent such an unfortunate event from happening. Although his son was an able leader who often led the kingdom's troops into battle, from that moment onward, the king expressly forbade him from doing so. The King took other measures too. To prevent a spear-related accident from happening at home, His Highness had all the kingdom's iron weapons gathered up and stored in the royal chamber. He even made sure that there were no javelins or other weapons hanging on the walls as ornaments or trophies, just to remove the possibility that one might fall on his son's royal head and fatally wound the heir to the throne.

All this and more the king did in order prevent the prophecy from being fulfilled. But then, as you might have already guessed, something happened to make it come true anyway. One day a contingent from Mount Olympus

came to petition Croesus for help with what today we could call a wildlife control issue. A monster boar had suddenly appeared on the sacred mountain, scaring the bejesus out of all and sundry. As monster boars of that era tended to do, it repeatedly rushed down from the heights, devastating the crops below and maiming anyone who got in its way. Unable to stop this beast themselves, the besieged locals wondered whether the king would be so gracious as to do it for them. Would he, they asked, be so kingly as to send his brave son to remove the threat this dangerous animal posed?

He might well have done exactly that, but there was the uncomfortable little fact of that God-sent dream. Remembering it, the King flatly refused. This whole wild boar business sounded far too dangerous to even contemplate: how could he put his son in harm's way, given the prophecy? But he had to do *something*. So instead of sending his son, he promised the villagers that he would send a group of elite soldiers and a pack of fierce hunting dogs.

But that, of course, wasn't the end of it. His son heard about the request made by the petitioners and begged his father to reconsider. After all, the young man argued, was it not true that his father's dream had *specifically* mentioned that the son's death would be caused by an iron spear? Well, then, the boy said triumphantly. That settles it. A boar didn't even possess hands, so how could it thrust a spear? Though perplexed by his son's argument, his father was forced to agree. Boars, thank Zeus, hadn't yet figured out how to use iron. That made everything clear. He would allow the young heir to go to Mount Olympus and put down the offensive monster.

The king's decision had fatal consequences, however. For when the prince proceeded to Olympus, he ended up getting killed anyway—by an iron javelin that one of his own men threw at the boar.

The prophecy had come true.

Now fast forward two years. King Croesus, still in mourning over his son's death (people took mourning seriously in those days), was faced with a much larger problem than a monstrous boar. The Persian Empire, vast and

potent, was right next door. The King would stay awake night after night worrying about it. *Just how much of a threat did the Persians pose? Would they attack? Should he attack first?* The King did what any modern CEO of a Fortune 500 company would do: he decided to seek expert advice. But instead of hiring a management consultant, he sought help from another quarter—namely, in the services of an oracle. If only he could get one to tell him how to respond should the Persians decide to send their army of war elephants rampaging through his territory. That would be helpful indeed. But this, in turn, raised a problem. There were oodles of famous oracles scattered across the ancient world.

Which one could he trust?

As he already knew, psychic predictions were sometimes slippery and vague. (When it comes to psi, it was always thus.) He needed someone who *really* knew his or her stuff. That, in turn, necessitated the creation of an appropriate test, one that only a true seer would be able to pass. Fortunately for him, he had ample financial resources to conduct a really good one. He was, after all, as rich as Croesus. He sent emissaries far and wide, arming each with carefully considered instructions. Among other things, they were to keep careful track of the time and, at a pre-assigned moment, simultaneously ask each one of the oracles a specific question. The question itself was a clever one.

What is the King of Lydia doing right now?

The emissaries went forth and did as they were told. The oracles were contacted simultaneously, and their answers were carefully recorded and sent back to the King. Receiving them, he read them all.

And rejected them all.

Well, all except *one*.

The Oracle of Delphi's answer gladdened him enormously, for it hit the nail on the head. For at the very moment the questions were asked, the King had been doing something *very* unusual, something that could never be guessed by an imposter who was merely *posing* as an oracle. And what was the King doing, you may ask?

Well, he was cutting up a tortoise and a lamb and boiling them in a

bronze cauldron with a bronze lid.

The Delphic Oracle's answer reflected that perfectly, though in somewhat poetic prose (remember what we said about spirit controls and their preference for flowery language?). The oracle said:

> I know the number of the grains of sand and the measure of the sea. I understand the mute and I hear the one who does not speak. The smell has come to my senses of a hard-shelled tortoise, boiling with meat of lamb, where bronze is spread below, bronze set above.[60]

This response pleased Croesus so much that he showered the Oracle of Delphi with stupendous quantities of gold and jewels, including his own wife's necklace (history does not, alas, record her reaction). Herodotus gives us an idea of just how much wealth was poured into the Delphic temple's coffers.

> [Croesus] melted down an immense amount of gold and made bricks of it, making them six hands in length, three hands in width, and one hand in height, 117 in number, four of them of refined gold, each weighing two and a half talents, the rest of white gold, two talents in weight. He also had fashioned the statue of a lion, of refined gold, with a weight of ten talents. When the temple in Delphi [later] burned, this lion fell off the bricks—for it stood upon these—and now lies in the treasury of the Corinthians, weighing six and a half talents, for three and a half talents melted off.

Since a talent, an archaic measure, was roughly 50 kilograms or 110 pounds, the golden lion statue alone would have weighed more than 1,000 pounds! Naturally, King Croesus expected something in return for all this bounty. He wanted answers, particularly to what was then his all-consuming obsession: the Persians. Should he attack them? The answer was not long in

coming: the Oracle informed him that *should he attack, a great empire would fall*. Overjoyed, the King took this as an indication that the Gods and Goddesses were blessing his warlike endeavor. He promptly launched an attack.

And lost *everything*.

It's not that the Oracle was wrong, however. What she had predicted *did* come to pass. A great empire *did* fall: it just wasn't the Persian Empire. It was the empire of the man who had the nerve to try to bribe the Gods.

The King Croesus example is just one of many instances of oracular activity that we could cite from the ancient world, which in pre-Christian times held a great and abiding respect for seers, even if, as in the case we just examined, there was enough skepticism regarding their abilities that it was felt necessary to conduct tests to determine which ones were frauds and which ones weren't. Upon the advent of Christianity, the situation changed radically in the West, where, thanks to a highly territorial church, anyone foolish enough to openly declare herself a psychic would be subjected to ostracism, torture or death, and usually all three. Whether psi ability is genetic in origin or learned behavior (or both), the resulting loss to Western civilization is incalculable.

In the East, it's a different story. There, as in South America and Africa, paranormal activity is taken for granted by much of the general public (and many of the educated elites, as well), and traditional techniques are passed on from generation to generation. It is in those places that psi research should focus its efforts, as opposed to the West, where very deliberate measures have been put in place to suppress psychics of all varieties, thus greatly lessening their number *and* their willingness to operate publicly.

Is it any surprise, therefore, that we should look around us and ask in vain where today's Delphic Oracle is? While it is true that some continue to offer their services in North America and Europe, they do so only against all the odds, and most are understandably skittish about laboratory tests, given how the scientific community has treated the results of such tests in the past, *even* when they've resulted in confirmation of psi ability. In the case of Garrett, she grew up in an environment where the reigning belief system

was very different from today's. In key ways, *she was given permission* to be a psychic, whereas in most Western households today, there is no encouragement whatsoever. Imagine how few Olympic athletes we would have if our youth were actively discouraged from participating in sport? And while many of the experiments that seek to verify the existence of psi (as if that's even needed after over a century of verification) focus on a random sampling of the population, perhaps researchers would make more progress if they instead focused on training naturally gifted practitioners instead.

In Eastern societies such as India, as well as in other parts of the world where Buddhism and Hinduism are strongly represented, consciousness is something to be refined and mastered, and centuries of tradition go into doing precisely that. When Swami Rama demonstrated his telekinetic and telepathic abilities, he was doing so following years of training under the guidance of experts. It seems logical that instead of attempting to reinvent the wheel, we should simply learn from those who have already built it.

But this would require three things that Western science is loath to do: (1) take ancient tradition seriously; (2) take mental events seriously; and (3) take anecdotal evidence seriously.

As for the first of these, many today quite wrongly hold the view that ancient peoples were unsophisticated brutes who believed the world was flat and that stars were just diamonds suspended in the sky. This is far from the truth. Ancient civilizations were actually responsible for a whole host of stunning discoveries and inventions—breakthroughs that were made without the benefit of the vast array of expensive instrumentation available to the modern scientist. When you reflect on the accomplishments of the long-ago peoples who preceded us, it's almost unfathomable how they were able to arrive at them through something as crude as mere observation or trial and error.

The educated Greeks and Persians of Croesus's day were not "flat earthers" by any means. They not only knew that the Earth was a sphere, but had calculated the exact circumference of the planet to within 2% of today's measurements. Their mathematics, partly inherited from even more

ancient cultures such as the Babylonians and Sumerians, was highly advanced. The ancient engineering marvels still visible today—Stonehenge, the pyramids of Egypt and Central America, the mighty stone temples of Syria, Lebanon and Peru—emerged from societies at least as capable as we are of creating long-lasting stone structures built to a precision that is unthinkable today without the use of the most advanced tools at our disposal (and such tools are rarely at the disposal of modern construction companies). Among them are stone structures near Baalbek, Lebanon, where precision-cut rocks weighing *millions* of pounds were transported for considerable distances before being used as foundation blocks for temples.

Then there are ancient accomplishments in the field of medicine. Brain surgery was practiced more than 7,000 years ago in Europe and India. For centuries Native Americans used the crushed needles of the Pacific yew tree as medicine: how they stumbled upon this remedy is a mystery, as the tree itself is toxic and its seeds are lethal. In the 1960s US scientists "discovered" that the tree's bark had anti-cancer properties; it now forms the basis of Paclitaxel, which the US-based National Cancer Institute describes as "the most well-known natural-source cancer drug in the United States."[61] Surprisingly, the institute fails to mention on its website overview for this clearly important drug that US aboriginals had been using the *same* tree for medicinal purposes for hundreds of years before US researchers found out about its anti-cancer applications. But the more important question is this: *How could natives have known it was medicinal in the first place?* Even in the extremely improbable event that an aboriginal had somehow guessed that a tree (as opposed to a rock, a fish, a bird, an insect, the sweat underneath your armpit, the color of the sunset, jumping up and down five times, etc., etc.) could have healing properties, there are about a *thousand* tree species in North America. And this one is toxic. Um, oh yeah. Forgot about that for a second. Trial and error?

Smoke another one.

Then there's the puffer fish. We are in the dark about how this extremely toxic fish came to be regularly consumed, which it is, across Asia. It is so poisonous that highly trained chefs must reduce its lethal toxins to the point

where the fish becomes edible—yet it has been eaten in Japan and China for well over two thousand years. Clearly the ancient people who preceded us were tremendously lucky (or tremendously psychic?) to have perfected such a technique. One wonders how they realized that the fish could be made safe to consume in the first place, especially since eating it without the most painstaking preparation can result in instant death due to the presence of the neurotoxin known as tetrodotoxin.

According to Harvard anthropologist Wade Davis, tetrodotoxin is also one of the chief ingredients in "zombie powder"—a powder used in Haiti to mimic death in those who have been targeted as potential slaves.[62] The preparation of the powder itself isn't quite as straightforward as collecting a sufficient quantity of the toxin, however, for it also contains ingredients found in the marine toad, a species of tree frog and even human remains, each of which is essential in order to create the desired result. Care to speculate how such a strange combination was discovered?

The history of food and medicine contains many examples of poisonous materials requiring extremely complicated methods of preparation. It is an absolute wonder *why* our ancestors thought such victuals and remedies would be useful and/or delicious and/or edible in the first place. Aloe vera has been used for medicinal purposes for over 4,000 years, but why anyone thought that the inner contents of an evergreen perennial native to Arabia was a safe and effective health remedy is utterly unknown. The same can be said of most herbal concoctions. Many pharmaceutical drugs consumed today were originally inspired by herbs that had been in use for millennia (and which even today have fewer side effects than their Big Pharma descendants).

Turning to the field of astronomy, it's a similar story. The ancients knew a lot of stuff about the heavens. They had an astounding knowledge of the sky, including the cyclical nature of many astronomical phenomena. In addition to discovering sunspots centuries before the Europeans did, the Chinese, using only the crudest of instruments, had been cataloguing the night sky for thousands of years before latecomers like Copernicus and Galileo arrived on the scene in Europe. Thousands of years ago, ancient

temples were carefully aligned to celestial events such as the solstice and equinox, and evidence has continued to mount that ancient astronomers knew far more about the celestial realm than modern historians originally suspected.

All this is to say that ancient culture was not primitive by any stretch of the imagination: in fact, it was surprisingly competent and knowledgeable. It is not outside the bounds of reason to ask whether at least *some* of their startling ingenuity can be explained by Charles Townes' suggestion that knowledge sometimes comes to us "out of the blue" as revelations—as messages received by what Upton Sinclair called our "mental radios." In other words, could paranormal abilities have had something to do with the remarkable capacity of so-called backwards societies to come up with so many medical, astronomical, mathematical and engineering insights? It would explain a lot of things that currently have no explanations worthy of the name.

Regardless of how you answer these particular questions, our civilization —or at least large segments of it—has clearly been doing a lot of ruminating about ancient culture in recent decades, and the specific issue of consciousness and *our control of it* is at the center of those deliberations, as is the issue of whether accessing other "planes of existence" is possible. The 1960s, for instance, was a time of great intellectual ferment in this regard, what with the likes of Alan Watts and Aldous Huxley promoting worldviews that incorporated elements of Buddhism, Hinduism and meditation. But this was only the most recent expression of the West's on-and-off love affair with Eastern civilization. The East (India, Egypt and China in particular) has been a source of fascination in Europe from at least the time of Alexander the Great. Alexander himself was so impressed by the Punjabi philosopher Kalanos that he persuaded the Indian sage to return with him to his grand new capital in Persia. One of the very few to be unafraid of the terrifying Greek conqueror, Kalanos was also unafraid of death: after being weakened by his lengthy Asiatic travels with the Alexandrian army, he decided to put himself out of his misery by killing himself on a funeral pyre, a spectacle observed by everyone in Alexander's

camp. According to witnesses, he endured the flames without even flinching. One wonders, upon hearing this, whether he had some of the abilities Swami Rama would later demonstrate.

As somewhat of an aside, suicide wasn't uncommon among the ancient Greeks, either, particularly among the old and infirm, and most of us have heard the story of Socrates, the teacher of Alexander's teacher's teacher. As recounted in one of the most famous philosophical works in Western history, the *Apology*, Socrates did himself in with the help of a healthy dose of hemlock. He too was unafraid of death, mainly because he didn't believe in it. To him, death *was* a doorway. And how, you might ask, did he come by that opinion? According to him, the Gods had told him so. One of their emissaries, a spirit known as a *daemon*, spoke to him regularly, apparently providing him with all sorts of useful information. Surprising as it may sound to those of us accustomed to hearing Socrates extolled as the father of Western rationalism, he actually believed he could carry on conversations with spirits and deities. Yes, the great Socrates himself had what Spiritualists and Theosophists would today call a spirit guide, or what the classical Arabs would have called a *jinni* (a word with which the English terms *genie* and *genius* are etymologically related). It's an uncomfortable little fact that is usually glossed over in university philosophy classes, or reinterpreted in such a way so as to neuter this divine inner voice of his by presenting it as nothing more than a "voice of conscience." This is how pretzel logic operates. The truth is that the famous Father of Western Philosophy was not only a mystic who spoke to spirits, but someone who believed in reincarnation and the afterlife.

He was also quite enamored with what could loosely be called the Orient, though in his case the Orient took the form of Egypt and Atlantis, which he believed had sunk into the sea centuries before his own time. Though many of us today consider Atlantis to be either a myth or a small island that sunk somewhere in the Mediterranean, Socrates considered it to have been both very real and quite large, and to have sunk in the Atlantic beyond the Strait of Gibraltar.

In displaying such an attraction to ancient, non-European cultures,

Socrates was only the first in a long line of Western thinkers. Hundreds have followed his lead, though only after the considerable intellectual gap known to us as the Dark Ages, when Christianity was busy exterminating outside influences. There are revealing studies showing how many ancient symbols of the East, such as Lord Shiva's trident, were transformed by the Church into symbols of evil, while even today Eastern meditative practices such as yoga are capable of causing conniptions in some fundamentalist Christians. Goethe, Voltaire, Emerson, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Thoreau, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Oppenheimer, Jung and Schrödinger were just some of those who followed in the footsteps of Socrates when it came to the admiration of Eastern thinking. As a result, European literature, science and thought owe an immense and unpaid debt to India, China, the Middle East and Africa, one that is as deep as it is unrecognized.

But we *can* recognize it.

When we encounter people like Swami Rama—or Eileen Garrett, whose pagan heritage and unorthodox views made her equally foreign as far as Western modernity was concerned—we can ask ourselves a key question that will go a long way toward rectifying the imbalance between East and West. *Just what did we lose when the bulldozers of the modern world leveled the world that preceded it?* Just what did we lose when the Church obliterated pagan traditions? What was lost when it eliminated the healers, the herbalists and the other carriers of knowledge it considered threats? What, too, was lost when Julius Caesar burned the Great Library of Alexandria to the ground? Or when Rome invaded Carthage, another great center of African learning, and burned *its* library to the ground? Is it possible that the reason the West thinks it is so vastly superior to anything that came before it is that whatever came before it was so thoroughly annihilated that it can't speak for itself? And is it possible that the only reason our civilization survived is not because of our superior virtue, knowledge or intelligence, but because we were better at warfare? But above all these questions, there hovers another that must take precedence because of its overarching importance*: if we did lose something precious when we set fire to the past, is it possible to find out what it was?*

Perhaps we can.

Perhaps it's not too late to look at the remaining fragments of ancient healing and meditative practices as they exist today and find the lost thread that will lead us into a future where the abilities demonstrated by the swami, Eileen Garrett and others are no longer the *exceptions* to the rule, but the rule itself. Think for a moment about how this would revolutionize our medicine, our science, our daily lives and our understanding of our place in the cosmos. To find that lost thread, however, we have to listen closely to what such mystics had to say when they did what they did—when they performed their "magic," in other words. We have to respect *their* perspectives, rather than doing what the West (like other warrior civilizations) has always been so accustomed to doing, which is running roughshod over other cultures and putting words into their mouths. Perhaps by listening to what mystics *say* they do when they access other states of consciousness will help us recover what was lost and inject a little bit of that ancient magic into our lives once again. Perhaps then we, like Croesus, will also be able to consult the Gods—but without making the mistake of trying to bribe them.

IX

Swedenborg & Superconsciousness

In the center of Shinto temples stands a mirror symbolizing the fact that to see reality one must see both oneself and the illusory nature of the self, see the reality of the separate entity and see that—from another viewpoint—it is not reality, but illusion.

—Lawrence LeShan[63]

Earlier we met the Swami Rama, the Indian mystic who was an interesting case for several reasons. For one, he seems to have been able to ignore the dividing line between consciousness and unconsciousness, which to most of us is more or less fixed, with only a limited amount of interaction: ideas bubble up to the surface of consciousness, feelings emerge from the nether regions, that sort of thing. He, however, claimed to be able to examine the contents of his own subconscious at will, almost as easily as if he were reading a children's book, as well as to affect parts of his body (heart, blood cells, tissue, etc.) that are normally considered outside the realm of purposeful manipulation by the conscious mind. "All of the soft tissues of the body are easy to manipulate," he declared to researchers. This was so, he informed them, because the body is merely a *servant* of the subconscious, and the subconscious, in turn, could be consciously controlled as a result of meditative techniques perfected after much instruction and practice. *The mind*, in other words, *is sovereign*. It is hard to overemphasize just how profound of a departure this is from what has been the dominant belief system in the West. In the West, which has been bogged down in a crude materialism for decades, if not centuries, that degree of mental power is an extremely radical idea; in the East, where the swami hailed from, not so

much. In North America and Europe, it is true that we blab on and on about "mind over matter" and "the power of positive thinking," but for the most part, it's just empty motivational chit-chat. You know, bulletin board material designed to psych the team up before the big game or sales pitch. *Rhetoric*. This was something more: something *much* more.

In short, from the swami's perspective, human beings are not (or at least don't have to be) *victims* of subconscious processes, fears and memories. They have the in-born potential to become their own masters—in the fullest sense of that much overused term. His ability to manipulate his own heart rate, as well as affect the behavior of objects at a distance, lends a great deal of credence to such extraordinary claims. Of course, his comments about physiology fly in the face of most of what Western medicine has drilled into our heads, namely that human beings are nothing more than material objects, subject to chemical processes that are explicable in terms of well-known physical laws. From the swami's point of view, this is turned on its head: the body is ultimately a *mental representation*, a type of fleshy energy pattern controlled—or at least capable of being controlled—by mind. The mental, in other words, is master of the material**.** Mind over matter, *not* matter over mind.

He said he was able to kill individual blood cells on command—a claim Green's team was unavailable to verify prior to the swami's return to India—by *withdrawing his consciousness* from the cells in question. Similarly, upon death, it was his belief that consciousness withdraws itself from the "body pattern" as a whole and the latter gradually dissolves. As for consciousness, it does not: it continues to exist. As for living bodies, each organ has an energy/mind counterpart that together forms an energy pattern called the *subtle body* (in Sanskrit, the *sukshma sharira*): for example, the physical heart has a subtle heart that controls its material counterpart.

His stated purpose in making himself available to researchers in the West was to act as a bridge between the ancient philosophical traditions of the Indian subcontinent and the relatively new ones of the Western world. His philosophical background, at least in part, can be traced to the Upanishads, a collection of ancient texts that had a profound effect on Schrödinger and

other Western thinkers. A part of the wider mystical tradition called the Vedas, the Upanishads had a major influence upon the development of Hinduism and Buddhism—and Western literature. Among the oldest repositories of spiritual and philosophical thought on the planet, the Upanishads are too complex to be discussed here in any depth, but for our purposes, it's easy to see why great minds such as Goethe, Jung, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Schrödinger, and other leading Western thinkers were so profoundly affected by them. Though "Upanishad" can hardly be considered a household term in the West, many of the key ideas contained in these dusty old texts are familiar to us anyway, as they were transmitted to us thanks to some of our most influential intellectual gatekeepers—through the back door of our cultural consciousness, as it were. Goethe and the gang had not forgotten (as so many of us have today) that the Renaissance would not have been possible without the attempt to recapture the "lost wisdom" of ancient times. The philosophical and scientific thought of ancient figures such as Plato, Socrates, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, among many others, had for the most part disappeared by the 15th century—at least as far as Europe was concerned. When it re-emerged in the Renaissance, it had such a deep impact that it changed Western civilization forever. As one observer put it:

> One of the driving forces of the Renaissance from its earliest days in Italy was the longing to rediscover the primordial wisdom of humankind. This, it was felt, had become obscured and lost with the passing of centuries. This was the motive that led Marsilio Ficino to translate the works of Plato at the very outset of the Renaissance. But beyond Plato, it was thought, beyond even Pythagoras, lay other yet more primary and inspired sources, if only they could be discovered.[64]

But it wasn't just ancient Greece that the West found so magnetic. Ancient India was at the top of the list of "primary and inspired sources" as well, and the Upanishads were the reason. So powerful were the thoughts

contained in these age-old ruminations on the nature of reality that Mahatma Gandhi once remarked that if someone were to burn every last piece of scripture that Hinduism held dear, it would *still* be able to exist as a religion if only a *single* verse of a *single* Upanishad—the Isha—survived the flames. Boiled down to its essence, the Isha contains three key ideas, all of which are germane to our discussion of psi: (1) the ultimate basis of reality is consciousness, not matter; (2) higher knowledge focuses on spiritual reality, while lower knowledge focuses on the empirical sciences; and (3) all individual human beings are connected via a divine superconsciousness called Brahman.

That many of these ideas sound familiar to us may serve to hide just how truly radical they were when they were recorded (first orally, then in written verse) eight or so centuries *before* Christ. The third point on our list is perhaps the most radical of all. Why? Because not only does the Isha posit the existence of a superconsciousness, but that superconsciousness *doesn't* take the form of a God. Brahman, in other words, is not God. Brahman is *higher* than God. The Gods, in fact, take a back seat in the Upanishads. They exist, true, but only as minor characters in a great cosmic play, players who are themselves superseded by the all-knowing source of everything, Brahman. It was an idea that many Church-weary European writers and thinkers found instantly appealing. That wasn't all they found appealing. They also liked the fact that the Upanishads warn us that if you spend your time worshipping Gods, you essentially are functioning as their food source: you offer yourself up as human cattle, in other words, fit only for the divine barbecue. Instead, they urge us turn our attention back to the Source from which both we *and* the Gods have sprung. And that Source is Brahman.

Now, just how radical was this idea?

Well, let's put it this way. Saying this kind of thing would have gotten you tortured and burned at the stake in almost every single country that has ever existed right up to the 21th century (and in some countries today, it still would).

As for rituals, which are seemingly so essential to the world's religions,

the Upanishads considered them unimportant. What *is* important is knowing yourself, for you carry within you the spark of divinity that *links* you (hello, Jung) to the much larger fire of Brahman. According to the Upanishads, we are not individuals at all, but interlinked carriers of divine knowledge: accessing that knowledge and merging with the larger divine consciousness, i.e., Brahman, are the primary goals of life.

That, at any rate, is the *Coles Notes* version of these texts, and as with any ancient scripture, it is open to interpretation. For our purposes, our foray into the Upanishads is simply a way of framing our discussion of the swami and his non-Western way of looking at reality. If we are, as he and other mystics claim, not individual human beings at all but more akin to individual waves on a vast ocean, continually dissolving and forming again but always maintaining a connection with the larger sea of which we are a part, then presumably that connectivity could allow us to *explore* that sea, could it not? In other words, if you and I are not separate, but actually intimately connected (and in fact part of a single super-entity called *Brahman*), that would go a long way toward explaining how we could communicate with each other telepathically, intercept each other's thoughts or locate objects at a great distance, all of which are hallmarks of psychic activity. In short, the ideas of the Upanishads can help explain psi.

It should be clear by now where Jung got the notion of "collective unconscious" in the first place—and in fact, he made no secret of his debt to the East, citing both ancient Indian and Chinese thought as key influences.[65] He and many other Western thinkers functioned in much the same way as the swami did, as bridges between the modern and the ancient, helping to keep alive some of the oldest ideas in existence despite the extraordinary pressures of the modern world, which always likes to think of itself as the source of all that is good, and the best of all possible worlds. After all, *we* can go down to a corner store and buy candy bars that were made on the opposite side of the globe, then trot across the street to a bar and chug a beer that was made five thousand miles away. Could the *ancients* do that?

Now, we don't have to convert to Hinduism or Taoism in order to benefit from their insights. We don't even have to use their terminology: Jung and

the other thinkers we've mentioned rarely did, preferring to make up new terms for their contemporaries, while keeping the underlying ideas more or less intact. And those underlying ideas are the important thing, after all. *Connectivity. Interconnection. The power of mind.* It's almost as if the ancients are holding up a big sign and telling us where to go. Should we not take their advice seriously, given both the laboratory and anecdotal evidence in support of the view that such concepts have reality, and are not just "West Coast woo-woo," as some like to put it? Certainly the Pentagon and CIA do, and they're hardly alone. Just because scientists haven't proven the existence of a "mechanism" linking human beings together doesn't mean one does not exist. In fact, the proof is in the pudding: and the pudding takes the form of all the evidence psi researchers have gathered so far, some of which you have already seen in this book.

Cumulatively speaking, the lab experiments and anecdotal evidence point to a view of reality far closer to that which is contained in the Upanishads than that which has been presented by the last hundred years of conventional Western thought, which still tends to view humans as physical robots without a "ghost" to operate the machine. Still, one day Western scientists might catch up to the radical ideas set forth in the Upanishads (and in the much newer quantum physics) and create a functional worldview that is closer to that held by the mystics who created modern science in the first place. Certainly some—including Fritjof Capra, Brian Josephson and Amit Goswami, all physicists—have argued just that. When Josephson suggested that physics might one day explain telepathy, he was simply recognizing that the concepts the West has used to explain human consciousness are no longer up to the task, if they ever were in the first place.

As we have seen, Swami Rama was a bridge between East and West, the rational and the intuitive, logic and mysticism. Socrates surely must be considered in the same vein, seeing as he stood at the juncture between Egypt and Greece, the oral and written, the spiritual and the empirical. Soon after his departure came Aristotle and all his suffocating empiricism, his obsession with classification schemes, and his damned lists, all of which

constitute the boring pastimes of scholars bereft of passion: Western science in embryonic form. Socrates, the supposed grandfather of it all, would have had trouble stifling his yawns. Thankfully, he died before the thing he helped give birth to began strangling its parents.

But if he and the others truly were bridges to alternate ways of thinking, perhaps, by looking at their work with fresh eyes, we can get them to help us cross back over to the "other side"—to that pre-Western, pre-scientific world that we have sadly lost—allowing us to rediscover whatever jewels might still be hidden there.

* * *

Someone who might assist us in this respect was the Swedish scientist-mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, another figure who bridged multiple worlds. Known now for his brand of quasi-Christian mysticism, initially Swedenborg was far from being a mystic in orientation. In fact, he was known as one of the leading scientists and inventors of his time.

Born in Stockholm in 1688, he displayed an early talent for mathematics and science. The son of a bishop, his family could afford to send him to the University of Uppsala, where he learned Latin, Greek, a number of European and Oriental languages, as well as astronomy, metallurgy, geology and other subjects. After graduation he traveled around Europe, studying under some of his era's most illustrious scientists and thinkers, including John Flamsteed (master of the Greenwich observatory), the astronomer Sir Edmund Halley (who determined the periodicity of the famous comet that bears his name), Dr. John Hudson (chief librarian at Oxford's Bodleian Library), Anton van Leeuwenhoek (a pioneering microscopist) and a host of others. A voracious learner, Swedenborg picked up a wide variety of skills in a short period of time, including watchmaking, lens grinding, and instrument making (he was so skilled at the latter that he made his own 42-power microscope, a considerable feat for the time). During his spare time, he did what the other young intellectuals of his day did: he hung out in coffee shops in London and Leiden, chatting about the latest scientific discoveries with his fellow scientists and mathematicians.

Somehow he also managed to squeeze in a daily dose of Isaac Newton, whose groundbreaking work, *Principia Mathematica*, was published only a year before Swedenborg's birth.

Returning to Sweden, he immersed himself in the development of the mining industry (his family had ownership stakes in some of the country's largest mines) while at the same time maintaining his interests in both pure and applied science. He founded the *Daedalus Hyperboreus* ("Northern Daedalus"), Sweden's first scientific journal. He also published numerous scientific works of his own and drew up plans for a series of devices, including flying machines and submarines. In fact, he is credited with coming up with a number of aviation firsts: his design for a fixed-wing aircraft contained wings with a true airfoil, a cockpit for a pilot, and landing gear.[66] Fully aware of the gap between a theoretical design for an aircraft and a working model, he noted: "When the first trials are to be made, you may have to pay for the experience and must not mind [injuring] an arm or a leg."

But he hardly restricted himself to matters of theory. He helped kick start work on a canal linking Stockholm with the North Sea, a monumental undertaking that wasn't completed in his lifetime, and supervised construction of both the Karlskrona drydock and Sweden's first saltworks. He also devised a method by which the King of Sweden's navy moved part of its fleet fifteen miles *overland* to fight the Norwegian navy in an attempt to gain possession of the stronghold of Fredrikshald. Far ahead of his day in terms of his knowledge of science and engineering, he knew, for example, that our galaxy was only one of thousands in the universe; he also made discoveries in the areas of anatomy and split-brain theory. Unarguably, he was a true polymath, par excellence.

Then, literally overnight, everything changed.

Swedenborg the analytical scientist suddenly became Swedenborg the intuitive mystic. He began having dreams—such strange and powerful dreams that he was propelled headfirst into a spiritual crisis that quickly turned his life upside-down. In the dreams, a series of religious figures, including Christ and God, instructed him to abandon his scientific pursuits

and follow a spiritual path instead. After one particularly potent dream, he did just that, setting aside his studies of mathematics and anatomy, and shortly thereafter resigning from his government post as assessor of mines. In little over a year, he transformed himself from one of Europe's most respected scientists into one of its most active spiritualists. He began doing all those "far out" things associated with 20th century New Age hippies (many of whom found inspiration in Swedenborg's approach).

He meditated.

He began analyzing and recording his dreams.

He acquainted himself with spiritual and "occult" literature such as the Kabbala.

He trained himself to enter extended periods of altered consciousness—the trance state, in other words—through the use of special breathing exercises.

Although he had paid little attention to spiritual matters during his career as a scientist and engineer, he now paid little attention to anything else. And according to him, one fine day at the age of 55 he crossed the boundary that surrounds the mundane world of things and entered a completely new world—one filled with subtle energies and a new way of knowing. He called this world *heaven*.

(But we, of course, can call it whatever we like.)

As a result of his foray into this mystical realm, he gained novel, psi-related abilities. Were they the real thing? Well, if we are to give any credence to the eyewitness reports of his contemporaries, they certainly seemed like it. On one occasion, for example, as he attended a dinner party in Göteborg (a city several hundred miles from Stockholm), his newfound talents came to the fore for all to see. Appearing agitated, he suddenly rose to his feet and informed his startled companions that a huge fire had broken out in the Swedish capital, near his home. He proceeded to provide a detailed description of said fire, one that was confirmed two days later by messengers from Stockholm. This and a number of other well-documented incidents made Swedenborg a bit of a sensation throughout Europe, to the point where even the Queen of Sweden sought his advice on matters both

spiritual and mundane.

But he was no Rasputin. Far from wanting power in this world, he wanted to retreat from it. He first disengaged himself from the practical world of mining projects and military engagements, focusing instead on the world that had opened up for him through his visions and dreams. He became an ascetic, gave up meat and existed mostly on coffee, bread and milk. (Call it the Swedenborg Diet). In a very real way, he cut himself off from the physical plane. And why wouldn't he? If we treat his accounts at all seriously (and why shouldn't we?), the plane he had discovered was one in which divinity was not a cold and distant abstraction, as it was in most Earth-bound religions, but entirely *accessible* and indeed capable of being visited.

How could life on Earth compare to *that*?

He had out-of-body experiences before anyone coined the term. He provided descriptions of Heaven and Hell, other planets, and other places on Earth, all with such vividness and earnestness that his sincerity is difficult to doubt. He was *definitely* seeing something: the question, of course, is *what*. His journals are both entirely unbelievable and completely believable at the same time. Being prisoners of the very plane he seemed able to leave behind at will, we naturally have trouble finding his "travelogues" credible; yet there is also so much similar testimony available today from people who have had near-death experiences (NDEs) and (as we will see) *actual death* experiences that we find it difficult to dismiss him entirely. Let us proceed, then, to entertain his ideas: after all, there's no need to make a commitment to his worldview, so put that valium away, pour yourself a shot of Swedenborg and enjoy.

According to Swedenborg, his out-of-body experiences (OBEs) were neither unnatural or really all that new; instead, they were the result of *rediscovering* a human skill that had been lost to humanity centuries before his time. It was a dormant ability, in other words, and one each of us could take advantage of should we wish it to be so. Among the things he said he learned during his OBEs were, as we have already indicated, a number of key things that have been repeated throughout the literature on

contemporary NDEs. This includes the view that we not only survive death, but also carry within ourselves the memory of every thought, emotion and action we experienced during life on the physical plane. Furthermore, the dead carry on living in much the same fashion as they did while on Earth. Heaven and Hell even have societal structures and governments (nope, there's no escaping government) created by the minds of its denizens. He also believed that once freed of physical constraints like the brain, our mental energies become greatly amplified, capable of creating whatever reality we wish to inhabit—within certain limitations, of course (try as we might, we can never escape to a place that is completely without rules). Many new inhabitants of the higher planes of existence initially cannot believe they are even dead. They are met by dead relations, go through a self-evaluation process and eventually choose their destination on the Other Side. Souls continue to wear clothing, carry on activities, marry, eat, drink and surround themselves with the "things" (obviously a term with loose meaning in the non-material realm) they had grown fond of during their earthly existence.

To Swedenborg, then, Heaven and Hell have little in common with the ones he had been taught about during his Christian upbringing. Heaven wasn't just eternal harpsichords and angelic voices; Hell wasn't Satan's boot crashing down on the skulls of human beings forever. They were both as complex and as variable as earthly life itself.

So what are we to make of Swedenborg's ideas?

While it is true that his psychic ability was scrutinized, and attested to, by many of his contemporaries, that doesn't mean we should leap to the conclusion that everything that came out of his mouth was gospel. (That's not how we roll.) One important qualification to keep in mind when reading his accounts is supplied by the Swedish mystic himself: to some extent, what we experience once we leave our bodies behind and travel into the Great Beyond is influenced by our own minds. Once free of physical fetters, the mind suddenly finds its power magnified. *For that reason alone, it is impossible for us to clearly distinguish between what the mind creates in the post-material realm and what it actually encounters*, *rendering*

descriptions of its experiences on the higher plane of consciousness indelibly tainted by its own preconceptions. This is a tricky point, so you might wish to pause and contemplate it for a few moments (or years). Swedenborg, a Christian, ended up seeing a realm that had at least *some* Christian elements, even though it differed significantly from the hellfire and brimstone descriptions of the Old Testament with which he had been raised. Which parts were products of his mind and which were products of the realm itself? Who's to say? And who's to say what he would've experienced had he been Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu?

In this respect, we are again reminded of Eileen Garrett's struggle—the struggle of all psi practitioners, we contend—to separate the incoming psi message from the flotsam and jetsam of her own mind. It seems to us that it all boils down to two very old themes: the importance of (1) self-knowledge (i.e., knowing what you are, which includes knowing where *you* start and the rest of the universe begins) and (2) self-control (knowing how to understand and, if necessary, moderate your desires). The ancients spoke of these qualities of *character* again and again and again, and for good reason. For if they are important qualities to possess while we are still on Earth, imagine how much *more* important they will be in a place where the mind is operating without inhibition. (Think of a car going downhill without any brakes, a child with an unlimited supply of chocolate chip cookies, or a movie director whose whims are instantly translated into reality, and you'll kind of get the idea or where we're going with this.) Without at least some ability to control and understand our own minds—to know ourselves in the fullest sense of the term—after we leave this world behind, it is perfectly conceivable that we might end up spending an eternity inside a fantasy of our own creation.

Or a nightmare.

But although we can't completely rule out the possibility that the things Swedenborg reported were partly the creation of his own mind, that doesn't mean his accounts hold no value. His are eyewitness reports, and as with any other realm of knowledge, the investigation into psi benefits greatly through the *inclusion* of such reports, rather than their exclusion. Currently,

we have created a climate of fear in which the first reaction of eyewitnesses to psi phenomena is to suppress their own experiences and the insight they could provide. We have no idea what we would have learned had we erred on the side of inclusivity in the past. We *know* Swedenborg was not the only one having such experiences; we also *know* that many other brilliant men and women shared similar outlooks. But against this backdrop there exists a general atmosphere in which such personal accounts are actively suppressed, and it's anyone's guess how much has been lost as a result. We would be wise, therefore, not to dismiss Swedenborg or others who claim to have made similar forays into the non-physical plane. But at the same time, we think it would be wise to realize that their descriptions are inevitably colored by their cultural and psychological lenses. Those lenses are created from the contents of their mental and emotional baggage—baggage we all carry. As in quantum mechanics, there is no crystal clear division between viewer and viewed, observer and object. The lines between are unavoidably blurred, and as a result, we'll have to get accustomed to reading between the lines—and that's not something everyone likes to do, particularly if they're obsessed with the obvious and the measurable, the twin hallmarks of crude empiricism.

Whether or not his observations were tainted by a cultural lens, as we contend, Swedenborg has to be considered a landmark in the history of parapsychology. His ability to remotely describe a fire in Stockholm reminds us of the psi-related incidents that sparked the beginning of the CIA's remote viewing project. Its origins began when Ingo Swann, a New York psychic, came to the attention of Stanford physicist Harold Puthoff, who was interested in exploring the links between consciousness and matter. Having heard Swann's claim that he was able to both intuit information and affect material objects at a distance, Puthoff was determined to find out for himself. He invited Swann to Stanford University to conduct a surprise test involving a magnetometer, an instrument used for measuring magnetism and detecting quarks. While giving Swann a tour of the university, Puthoff took him to the physics lab where the device was housed. Once there, the physicist made a request of his guest: would Swann

be able to demonstrate telekinesis right then and there? Swann agreed to try. Here is Puthoff's description of what transpired:

> During our visit to this laboratory, sprung as a surprise to Swann, [we asked him] to perturb the operation of the magnetometer, located in a vault below the floor of the building and shielded by mu-metal shielding, an aluminum container, copper shielding and a superconducting shield. To the astonishment of Stanford physics professor Dr. Arthur Hebard, whose experiments depended heavily on the magnetometer's much vaunted imperturbability to outside influence, Swann doubled the rate at which the magnetic field in the magnetometer was decaying. Then, in response to Hebard's disbelieving subsequent request, Swann stopped the field change altogether for a period of roughly forty-five seconds. As if to add insult to injury, he then went on to "remote view" the interior of the apparatus…by drawing a reasonable facsimile of its rather complex (and heretofore unpublished) construction. It was this latter feat that impressed me perhaps even more than the former.[67]

Naturally, once the spooks at the CIA caught wind of this, they wanted in: but if Swann's demonstration of telekinesis had caught their attention, what happened next must have surely riveted them to their seats. Intrigued by the potential they saw in remote viewing, the intelligence agency decided to put Swann and another one of Puthoff's psychics, Pat Price, to the test. An officer with the Office of Scientific Intelligence (now known as the Directorate of Scientific Intelligence) provided a set of coordinates and asked if the psychics could describe what was there. Price and Swann immediately produced detailed reports that were promptly forwarded to the CIA. Initially, the agency was unimpressed: the reports described "a few log cabins and a couple of roads," and then went on to discuss, in detail, a top-secret underground military installation located beyond a nearby ridge, along with the facility's codename and a number of other associated codenames, many of which centered around the game of pool. The first

response of the CIA agents reviewing the reports was disappointment. While the coordinates in question were in fact the location of the OSI officer's cottage, they had no knowledge of any top-secret facility in the area. In other words, it looked like an in-the-ballpark guess at best and a big, fat miss at worst. But something in both reports made the agency officials pause just long enough to warrant a second look. As Puthoff explains:

> The CIA officers noted a striking correlation between the two independent descriptions from Pat and Ingo. That seemed unlikely enough to send the OSI officer out to the site itself. What he discovered was that, unknown to the staff member who owned the cabin, just over the ridge was a highly sensitive underground government installation. The guy's vacation cabin was indeed there. But so were other elements of the viewing, and they were top-secret, a total surprise to the officers looking at the data. Some of the details were wrong, but a lot were right and they were stunningly precise, like the fact that the labels of each file folder in a locked file drawer inside the underground building were all designated by pool terms: cue ball, cue stick, and so on. Pat had even come up with the actual code name of the site: Haystack. From that point on, it got really serious. There was no question about the government's interest in what we were doing.[68]

Such examples of remote viewing, which abound in the literature on psi, furnish us with a framework to be able to better contextualize the psi-related claims made by Swedenborg and others. When you run across cases in which well-respected physicists and other scientists provide eyewitness reports about psi-related activity, it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore them. Swedenborg's claim to be able to "see" a distant fire in another city should be viewed in this context; it makes his assertion sound much less sensational than would otherwise be the case.

But while it looks like the Swedish mystic might have got a lot of things

right, it's also quite possible that he got a long of things wrong. This is the way it has always been with pioneers, as many of their adventures take place in unmapped regions, resulting in a lot of wrong turns and generalized stumbling around. This is the human way. The Swami Rama might very well have performed better, given all the tools in his cultural toolbox; then again, as a practicing Hindu, he might have simply encountered the trident-wielding Shiva or another member of the Hindu pantheon during his own extra-corporeal travels, leaving the question of what he saw just as open-ended. The mathematician Ramanujan encountered a Hindu goddess; it's anyone's guess what he would have encountered had he been Muslim. In a realm of pure consciousness—for that is the realm we are talking about here—the mind is king and appearance, its servant. Do we truly know where our thoughts end and another's begin? And can we ever *truly* know whether the Goddess or God we encounter in a visionary state is *really* a Goddess or God? For all we know, it could be our own soul expressing itself by projecting a mask—or *another* soul using a mask for the purpose of communication. Neither possibility is outside the realm of the thinkable. We are reminded of the 1997 science fiction movie "Contact" in which Jodie Foster's character encounters an alien intelligence. To make the encounter between human and alien less terrifying, the alien, which obviously has the ability to shape-shift, disguises itself as her deceased father. In the same way, a soul in Swedenborg's Heaven is able to look like Christ, Socrates or Satan: but just because its appearance is fluid and the underlying reality indeterminate doesn't mean it's merely the product of Swedenborg's imagination. The question of how to distinguish illusion from reality has consumed and obsessed and frustrated philosophers since the very beginning of human life on Earth, and none of them has ever provided an answer that is so firm that it leaves no room for debate or doubt.

The whole issue of visions and dreams brings to mind a series of experiments that were conducted in the 1970s to see if dreamers could be influenced by the thoughts of those still awake. The studies, which were a variation of experiments conducted by the Rhines, were carried out by Charles Honorton, a researcher at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn,

New York. In one such study, a doctoral student focused intently on a painting of a Mexican scene by the artist Carlos Orozco Romero. His purpose in doing so was to deliberately *send* the image in question to a dreamer located in a soundproof room several hundred yards away. The dreamer awakened a short time later and told the researchers about a vivid dream he had just had.

The dream was of a Mexican scene.

Coincidence?

In a related experiment, a young woman dreamt of one of her coworkers. In the dream, her colleague was looking at a collapsed building on the front page of a New York newspaper, *The Daily News*. Exactly two weeks later, just as the dream had predicted, the Broadway Central Hotel collapsed, and a photo of the calamity appeared on the front page of the same newspaper. The photo was almost identical to the one the woman had seen in her dream.

Another coincidence?

Reflecting on his years of research into ESP at Maimonides, Honorton (like scores of researchers before him) observed:

> The evidence of ESP, not only from our work but from a dozen other experiments, establishes beyond any reasonable scientific doubt that it occurs.[69]

As Honorton's studies showed, the dream state can serve as a doorway for telepathic communication. But if information *can* jump from one person's consciousness to another's using the springboard of the dreaming mind—and looking at Honorton's studies, it's difficult to see how a reasonable person could conclude otherwise—we are suddenly catapulted back into the prescientific era, to a time when dreams weren't just irrelevant brain farts taking place in the dead of night, but a whole class of sacred phenomena that need to be taken seriously because of the potentially valuable nuggets of knowledge they might contain.

And that was *exactly* how Swedenborg viewed them.

As mentioned earlier, Swedenborg's description of his experiences sound very much like those described in the literature on near-death experiences. One well-known case that can be mentioned in this regard involved a British man called Patrick Tierney, who temporarily died of a heart attack while in a London hospital and then found himself floating through a tunnel, after which he met deceased relatives—all hallmarks of a typical NDE. As the British man described his experience to the *Daily Mail*:

> The next thing I knew I was walking down a long dark corridor with wooden panels on the walls, like a medieval house. I was walking for what seemed like a long time when I came to a junction and the tunnel went off in two directions. To the left it was pitch black; in the tunnel on my right there was a very bright light. I took the right-hand tunnel, which came out into a wonderful garden full of beautiful colors. I'd never seen anything like it in my life. In the middle of the garden was a wooden picket fence, with my [deceased] parents standing behind it and looking at me. My [deceased] mother-in-law walked past and joined them. I went to go through the gate in the fence and my Dad said to me, "Whatever you do, don't go through that gate." My mother just smiled. Then I found myself back in the dark tunnel and the next thing I knew I could hear a woman calling my name. It was a nurse from the hospital.

The case of Eben Alexander is another that could be cited. The subject of a best-selling book, his NDE (it might be more apt to call it a *full-death experience*, given how long he was dead) was prompted by a rare illness that shut down his brain completely for seven days. But despite the cessation of brain activity, he continued to have awareness—which, from the point of view of Western medicine, is an impossibility. In fact, not only did he have awareness, but he experienced what he believed was an entirely different dimension of reality—one that, for lack of a better term, he called "Heaven." As Alexander relates:

> [Heaven] isn't "far away" at all. In fact, it's right here—right here where I am, typing this sentence, and right there where you are, reading it. It's not far away physically, but simply exists on a different frequency. It's right here, right now, but we're unaware of it because we are for the most part closed to those frequencies on which it manifests. We live in the dimensions of familiar space and time, hemmed in by the peculiar limitations of our sensory organs and by our perceptual scaling within the spectrum from subatomic quantum up through the entire universe.[70]

Eben Alexander's case is particularly compelling for two reasons. First, as indicated, he didn't just temporarily die on the operating table: his brain was totally shut down for a week. But that's not all. Alexander is a highly trained neurosurgeon who did his residency at Duke University, Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard. Presumably that means he knows quite a lot about how the brain works. Prior to his illness, he had all the usual skepticism a man of his educational background and training is expected to have about the paranormal in general and NDEs in particular. Like Swedenborg, however, his experience changed him radically, causing him to transition from atheist to theist practically overnight. Writing about his beliefs prior to his NDE, he stated:

> Like many other scientific skeptics, I refused to even review the data relevant to the questions concerning these phenomena. I prejudged the data, and those providing it, because my limited perspective failed to provide the foggiest notion of how such things might actually happen. Those who assert that there is no evidence for phenomena indicative of extended consciousness [beyond the brain], in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, are willfully ignorant. They believe they know the truth without needing to look at the facts.[71]

Unsurprisingly, following his NDE he wanted to dive into the literature on such experiences to see what others had said about their own journeys, but instead, following the advice of his son, he decided to first write down everything he had witnessed in order to reduce the possibility of being influenced by other accounts. The result was his highly readable work, *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*, which could be viewed as a modern-day counterpart to Swedenborg's accounts. Alexander's conclusion deserves to be cited at length:

> [W]e must acknowledge the fundamental role of consciousness in painting reality. Experiments in quantum mechanics shocked those brilliant fathers of the field, many of whom (Werner Heisenberg, Wolfgang Pauli, Niels Bohr, Erwin Schrödinger, Sir James Jeans, to name a few) turned to the mystical worldview seeking answers. They realized it was impossible to separate the experimenter from the experiment, and to explain reality without consciousness. What I discovered out beyond is the indescribable immensity and complexity of the universe, and that *consciousness* is the basis of all that exists. I was so totally connected to it that there was often no real differentiation between "me" and the world I was moving through…. [We are] irremovably connected to the larger universe. It is our true home, and thinking that this physical world is all that matters is like shutting oneself up in a small closet and imagining that there is nothing else out beyond it. [I also began to understand] the crucial power of belief in facilitating "mind-over-matter."

Again, like Swedenborg and others who have purportedly made the journey outside the restrictive confines of everyday awareness, Alexander points to the merging of his identity with the wider universe, to the point where he could not tell where *he* ended and the rest of reality began. This is central to the mystic worldview as it has been espoused over the past several millennia. As W.T. Stace wrote:

> The whole multiplicity of things which comprise the universe are identical with one another and therefore constitute only one thing, a pure unity. The Unity, the One…is the central experience and the central concept of all mysticism, of whichever type.[72]

If the body is merely a convenient vehicle for consciousness, rather than its beginning and end, this high-sounding pronouncement makes much more sense than it might first appear to the Western-trained mind. For if consciousness *isn't* limited by the body, where does it begin and where does it end? The boundaries between human beings suddenly get a lot blurrier. We enter the realm of energetics, of idea meeting idea, of the merging of minds. Is it possible that what we view as our purely limited selves—limited by the five senses—are really only limited because we have been *trained* to think so? And if so, what can we do to overcome years of brainwashing?

One thing we can do, as we have already argued, is to take a long look at what human beings across the world have actually experienced as far as psi is concerned. This involves not just opening our minds to so-called anomalous experiences—experiences, in other words, that don't neatly fit into mainstream scientific explanatory systems—but also using the general populace as *active participants* in the research process. Instead of simply allowing scientific elites to tell us what our reality is, we need to democratize the process and get input from the public.

This isn't as crazy as it sounds, and it's not the first time it's been suggested. When the Society for Psychical Research reached out to the public in the latter part of the 19th century, it was flooded with accounts of psychic activity. When the Rhines followed suit in the mid-20th century, they were inundated with letters from people who had experienced ESP-related phenomena. More recently, when Japanese researchers launched a nationwide survey asking the public about deathbed visions, they found that more than 20% of the population had seen deceased family members next to the beds of dying cancer patients (a figure that would likely have been

much higher had it not been for self-censorship). The study's authors concluded: "Clinicians should not automatically regard such visions as an abnormal phenomenon to be medically treated and rather provide an individualized approach.[73] They also noted that deathbed visions are hardly an uncommon or isolated phenomenon. Such visions have been reported by people of every cultural, educational, national, ethnic and religious background. The *Psi Encyclopedia* notes that the first book to appear on the topic was published by William Barrett, a professor of physics at the Royal College of Science in Dublin. It was primarily based on the observations of his wife, an obstetrician, who had worked with many women who had died during childbirth.

The Eben Alexander case involved a highly trained neurosurgeon who merely reported what he had experienced. Sounds simple, but given the existing taboo against such reports, accounts like his are typically suppressed before they even emerge—by the eyewitnesses themselves. The absence of such psi-related reports then serves to keep additional reports from surfacing, as no one wants to be the only one reporting them, and everyone becomes afraid of public ridicule. When psychiatrist Elizabeth Lloyd Mayer, who used a dowser to track down her daughter's stolen harp, made her experiences public, many of her fellow scientists and doctors approached her privately and told her of their own psi-related experiences —experiences they refused to speak openly about, for obvious reasons. Among them was one of the world's top neurosurgeons, a professional of long standing who had an extremely high success rate. Although such an expert would be welcomed at any medical school, he was unable to bring himself to teach because he was unable to admit publicly what he believed was the secret to his art. And what *was* that secret? As Mayer relates:

> As soon as he learns that someone needs surgery, he gets himself to the patient's bedside. He sits at the patient's head, sometimes for thirty seconds, sometimes for hours at a stretch. He waits—for something he couldn't possibly admit to surgery residents, much less teach. *He waits for a distinctive white light to appear around*

> *his patient's head.* Until it appears, he knows it's not safe to operate. Once it appears, he knows he can go ahead and the patient will survive. [Italics added.][74]

While listening to the public and encouraging open dialogue may seem too radical to those with a vested interest in the status quo, it will help the rest of us move forward and begin to process the wealth of information on psi-related activity that is clearly out there "in the wild."

* * *

One other thing we can do is to take a closer look at what mystics have in common. When we do, we find many practiced an internal art such as meditation, self-hypnosis, tai chi, breathing exercises or yoga. Some European tai chi clubs have been known to incorporate hypnotherapy and chi kung (traditional Chinese energy work that is either a cousin or a parent of tai chi, depending on one's perspective) into the group's core activities. Swedenborg himself used special techniques that combined visualization and breath exercises—a common way of entering an altered state of consciousness that is used in traditional Indian yoga, the Chinese martial arts, and newfangled forms of therapy such as holotropic breathwork.

The martial arts, in particular, are among the rare repositories of ancient mystical practices that are still readily available in the 21st century. Though most North American martial artists take a thoroughly materialistic approach to the fighting arts, there are still some who quietly follow the old ways. The mystical worldview is very much alive among the few masters and grandmasters who remain dedicated to traditional esoteric ways. One of them, Master Henry Wang, emigrated to Canada after years of training in Malaysia and Taiwan, where he was a martial arts champion of some renown. Since coming to North America, he has given many demonstrations of his remarkable, but not unique, ability to "push without pushing." Also known as "empty force," this refers to a martial artist's capacity to forcibly move an opponent *without* using physical strength. Though he describes this ability as a capacity to control his *chi*—a Chinese

term for the underlying life force, or energy, that animates all living beings—in essence what he does is a form of telekinesis, as it involves little or no physical contact. The force used, in other words, is empty—empty of muscular strength. In this way, what Wang and other tai chi masters are capable of is highly reminiscent of that which was demonstrated by the swami we met earlier: they use different terms to describe *how* they do what they do, but the effects are the same, and both view it as ultimately emerging from a form of meditation. In Wang's case, the meditation in question is the "moving meditation" known as tai chi and its sister practice, chi kung (also called qigong). Both he and the swami are also philosophical descendants of that great "spiritual family tree" that emerged in India more than two millennia ago with the authors of the Upanishads and, subsequently, the Buddha. Yoga, too, finds its source in these ancient traditions, but for Wang, a large dose of Chinese Taoism and Shaolin martial arts was tossed into the mix along the way, resulting in a synthesis of multiple Eastern philosophies and their attendant physical and energetic practices.

One of the co-authors of this book participated in one of Wang's demonstrations and can attest to the fact that there was no trickery involved: he *was* capable of making people hurtle backwards at considerable speeds merely by touching them. Fortunately, a couch was there to break the fall of anyone on the receiving end of this treatment. Wang was also able to perform other feats: he sat unmoving on top of a narrow steel railing as five students tried (unsuccessfully) to push him off; in another, he had a tug of war with five people who couldn't pull him over. As one of his students, a Western-trained physician, relates:

> One of his favorite [exercises] is having a student grab his little finger. Using only *chi* energy, he redirects the student's force and moves the student off center. It is not possible to use muscular force in such a situation, as a little finger is too weak.[75]

Just as interesting as Wang's abilities is what he says about them. He

contends that there is no sharp dividing line between his energy and that of his opponents. Everything is fluid; no one exists in isolation. Once you have learned to control your energy, it naturally leads to an ability to influence or detect the energy of others. The essential underlying unity spoken of in every mystical tradition is the realm in which he operates. In effect, his perspective is the classic mystical outlook. The difference between him, the swami and many other mystics, however, is that he and the swami are somehow able to translate *unio mystica*—that deep unification with the Godhead or the ultimate reality spoken of in every major mystical tradition—into a practical, material world application. Interestingly, Wang says anyone can do what he does—but at a price. It takes four hours of dedicated training every day for ten years to get close to his level, a huge commitment of time and energy few would undertake.

Bill Moyers, in his excellent television documentary on *chi* and the healing arts, travelled to Beijing for an encounter with another Chinese tai chi master very much in the same league as Wang. The elderly master demonstrated the same abilities, winning a tug of war with numerous students and easily resisting attempts by a strong, young US martial artist to budge him (as of this writing, the video is still available online). Although practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine are well aware of the properties of *chi*, to Western science, it's viewed as just another empty superstition—in short, as just another relic from the prescientific age. To which we would reply, so what? In this case, one person's relic is another person's gem. And this particular gem is capable of transmitting a worldview that first crystallized in the East at a time when the West was still in a primitive, embryonic state.

In China, where there is no longer any taboo against scientific research into such matters, considerable attention has been paid to martial artists like Wang, as well as to those who use *chi* in the healing arts. The results are highly illuminating. Scientists there discovered conclusive evidence that *chi* is not a figment of the superstitious imagination, but a real force with both martial and healing applications. In 1978, for instance, Tan Yao-qing, a Chinese chi kung master, was tested by the Shanghai Atomic Energy

Institute. His external *chi* (the type projected from the body) was found to have infrared and magnetic effects.[76] In 1981 the Chinese Academy of Science measured the microwaves in this type of *chi*. The experiments were conducted behind a lead screen on the assumption that *chi* could not penetrate lead; scientists quickly realized that such an assumption was wrong. Further experiments in 1986 again confirmed the capacity of directed *chi* to penetrate lead, and also demonstrated that *chi* can produce gamma rays. As one can imagine, such results caused a great deal of excitement among physicists and practitioners of *chi*-related arts such as chi kung and tai chi, and additional experiments followed. Working with chi kung masters Yan Xin and Liu Zonglin, researchers at the Beijing High Energy Physics Institute and the X'ian Communications University found more evidence confirming the presence of gamma rays in *chi* energy. One other experiment also deserves mention: it involved the use of *chi* to improve agricultural production. We'll turn to US chi kung master Paul Dong for a description:

> Professor Wang Jialin from Sichuan Province imported a species of mushroom from Japan, and the largest one grew to 2.52 kilograms (5.56 pounds) after external *chi* treatment. The productivity rate was raised by 34%, and the time of growth was speeded up by 31.5%. The Japanese were very impressed! In the light of [this and other experiments], we begin to wonder whether the skeptics shouldn't consider afresh the ability of the empty force to knock down or injure an opponent or "target" without physical contact.[77]

Chi, then, is quite real. The practices that seek to utilize it for health and self-defense are so old that they give us a fascinating window into an ancient world most of us thought had vanished. Ironically, it's a window we've been looking through for some time, though without knowing it: because if you've done calisthenics, and almost all of us have, you've done a rudimentary variation of chi kung. Some historians contend that Per

Henrik Ling (1776-1839), the Swede who founded the modern exercises, based them on descriptions of chi kung made by the Jesuit P.M. Cibot in 1779. A 19th century observer, a certain N. Dally, wrote in 1857 that "Ling's entire doctrine, theoretical and practical, is only a sort of photographic image of Taoist kung-fu" (kung-fu being an archaic name for chi kung.) Dally also referred to Ling's calisthenics as "a splendid Chinese vase overlaid with European paint."[78]

Another example of a rare, but intriguing, relic from ancient times is dowsing. Many of those who live in rural communities are familiar with this arcane practice, which involves using a simple hand-held device (sometimes no more than a forked stick or a pair of bent coat hangers) to acquire knowledge without the use of one's normal senses—an approach that puts it squarely within the category of ESP. Like many ancient practices, it is also the target of much ridicule from people who aren't familiar with its effectiveness. Despite the fact that we cannot fully explain *why* it works, however, there is little doubt that it does.

Perhaps the oldest of all information technologies, with evidence of its use going back to at least the time of the Pharaohs, dowsing is often associated with the search for underground sources of water, but it's not limited to that. A good dowser is able to locate not only subterranean water flows, but also missing objects and metal deposits at a very high rate of success. For this reason, dowsers are often quietly employed by major utilities, police forces, and mining corporations. The capacity of dowsing to locate veins of ore and even stolen musical instruments has brought this age-old technique to the attention of individuals, multinationals, scientific academies and even military organizations. As Elizabeth Brown pointed out in her survey of the topic, *Dowsing: the Ultimate Guide for the 21st Century*:

> Dowsing was used by the US Marine Corps in Vietnam to detect underground mines and booby traps, and by American intelligence agencies to locate missing planes and contraband drugs.[79]

Unsurprisingly, the medieval Christian church suppressed dowsers in the same way that it suppressed herbalists, heretics, apostates and yoga practitioners. This is not without a considerable amount of irony, as some of the greatest dowsers in history were actually Catholic priests, without whom the practice almost certainly would have been entirely wiped out in southern Europe (dowsers in northern Europe luckily had a patron in Queen Elizabeth I, who invited them to her country to prevent it from being left behind in the race to develop mineral deposits). One of the Catholic priests in question, the Abbe Alexis Bouly, was by all accounts a successful water dowser before he made a career change to a much more dangerous occupation: finding unexploded bombs following the First World War. If luck was the only explanation for his success at that particular activity, he must have had an ungodly amount of it: he died in 1958 at the ripe old age of 93, without having been blown up once. Was his longevity a fluke? As the quantum physicist Amit Goswami would later remark:

> If dowsers are operating by mere chance, it's pretty amazing how they can be so successful.[80]

Before Bouly shuffled off, he developed a reputation as one of the first modern medical dowsers, a practice he aptly called *radiesthesis*, from the Latin and Greek words for *radiation* and *perception*. He regularly diagnosed illnesses at French hospitals, and reportedly was able to identify microbial cultures in test tubes as easily as if he were observing them under a microscope.[81] Though his church is no longer turning witches into toast or torturing heretics with fiendishly ingenious devices, it still hasn't quite made up its mind about the technique some of its own priests helped to perfect. On the one hand, its teaching document, the Catechism, rejects "all forms of divination" (and clearly dowsing is in that category), but on the other hand, one of its representatives told a leading dowser that "scientific dowsing" seems "okay." Perhaps the Roman Church should hire a dowser to help it find its moral compass on this issue.

As for how dowsers are able to do what they do, it was that exact

question that the psychiatrist Elizabeth Mayer asked the dowser who located her daughter's stolen harp (as a refresher, please refer to Example 2 in the "Examples of Psi in Action" section at the beginning of this book). Here is his reply:

> The [dowsing] rods just show you what your subconscious mind knows anyway. Most people don't know how to get their subconscious mind talking to them. It's just intuition, that's all. [The rods…] give you a way to stop your brain from stopping all the rest of you from knowing. But master dowsers, they've learned how to contact the knowing real directly. So for them the rods don't matter anymore. They don't need them.[82]

In other words, dowsing *is* a form of ESP. The rods play a similar role to the hypnotist's, in that they help bypass the analytical mind in order to access information available to the subconscious. Once that "work-around" has occurred enough times, the rods (and the hypnotist) cease to be necessary, as the mind has learned how to perform the operation itself.

As mentioned earlier, dowsing is put to very practical use throughout the world, particularly by communities searching for water resources. It was towards this purpose that a ten-year project, sponsored by the German government, was carried out in Africa by the University of Munich. Led by physics professor Hans-Dieter Betz, it concluded that dowsing is remarkably effective as a means for locating underground sources of water:

> Extensive field studies—in line with provable and reliable historic accounts—have shown that a few carefully selected dowsers are certainly able to detect faults, fissures and fractures with relative alacrity and surprising accuracy in areas with, say, crystalline or limestone bedrock. A series of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) projects involving this technique were carried out in dry zones with unexpectedly high rates of success…. Finding or locating a sufficient number of

> relatively small fracture zones using conventional techniques would have required a far greater work input.[83]

Elsewhere, Austrian transportation officials used dowsing to reduce traffic fatalities on a dangerous stretch of the national autobahn network. Harald Dirnbacher, an Austrian engineer, said his team of transportation experts had tried everything they could to lower the death rate on the roadway, but nothing worked. They then quietly called in a group of practicing Druids to get their input! After using dowsing to survey the area in question, the Druids quickly came up with a plan. Their solution? They told autobahn officials to put up a number of massive quartz pillars next to the danger zone. Desperate for results, the skeptical officials agreed to give it a shot. The plan worked. During the two years in which the secret pilot project was in operation, the fatality rate plummeted to zero.[84] As Dirnbacher relates:

> I admit when we first looked at [the Druids' plan], we were doubtful. We didn't want people to know in case they laughed at us, so we kept the trial secret and small-scale. But it was really an amazing turnaround.[85]

We'll let the final word on dowsing go to Albert Einstein:

> I know very well that many scientists consider dowsing as they do astrology, as a type of ancient superstition. According to my conviction this is, however, unjustified. The dowsing rod is a simple instrument which shows the uncanny reaction of the human nervous system to certain factors which are unknown to us at this time.[86]

Voltaire's Wager

Betting on an open mind

> *A 19th century hypnotist named Hansen liked to do a spectacular trick in which a hypnotized subject was told he would become as stiff as a board. He was then made to lie across two chairs, with his head on one and his heels on the other. Several people would then stand on his chest and stomach, and he would not bend in the middle*.
>
> —Colin Wilson, *Superconsciousness*[87]

Are the startling powers demonstrated by Wang, Swedenborg, Garrett and others available to us all, at least in principle? Or are they only available to highly trained practitioners—the masters of one of the arts we've discussed? Can the wider populace access psi and other paranormal abilities without, say, spending decades trying? Is there a straightforward way of tapping the subconscious mind for its knowledge? And speaking of tapping, are there ways to tap into our own *chi* that require less effort than Wang's prescription of a decade of intense training under a tai chi master? To even be accepted as a student by the tai chi master in Bill Moyer's documentary, you have to go to a Beijing park and practice tai chi under the master's watchful eye for three years every day at dawn. That's just to prove you're worthy of further instruction. After that, the serious training starts. Such extraordinary commitment is natural in a country with still-living monastic traditions that put a heavy premium on patience and long-term thinking, but it seems a step too far for the average North American or European with a day job, a family and a desire for instant gratification. And let's face it, such levels of devotion form a nearly insurmountable barrier

for most of the planet's inhabitants, all of whom would presumably benefit (in terms of their mental and physical health) from being able to utilize such powers.

While near-death experiences seem to function as a short cut to spiritual knowledge and greater intuitive prowess—more than one psychic has said that an NDE somehow activated their ability—no one would recommend flatlining as a good way to develop one's talent. So how about meditation? Certainly it's a promising approach with many benefits, including greater self-awareness and tranquility. While there's nothing wrong with it as a pathway, however, it is certainly not a short cut to anything, let alone enlightenment. Perhaps, in fact, there *are* no short cuts, and nor should there be. Maybe some things you just have to earn over time.

However, there *is* one healing modality that has great potential as far as opening up the mind is concerned, and we've already been introduced to it: hypnosis. When it comes to accessing the subconscious mind for the purpose of healing inner trauma, gaining self-knowledge or even correcting some types of physical ailments, there are few better ways to proceed than sitting down in a hypnotherapist's chair. As we have already seen, Eileen Garrett used hypnosis as a way of gently entering the trance state. It both calmed her mind and allowed her to open up to her own inner self. Hypnosis has long been used in the medical community to treat a variety of ailments, reinforcing Eben Alexander's comments about the importance of recognizing the power of the mind—a philosophical position that Western science, in fits and starts, is slowly starting to embrace. In recent years, studies at Harvard Medical School (1999), Ohio State University (2004) and the Mayo Clinic (2009) have shown that hypnosis can do a whole lot more than just treat psychosomatic illnesses, the area to which Western medicine largely restricted it in past decades: it can also speed up the mending of broken bones, improve immune system functionality and help minimize chronic pain. This shows at least two things: (1) hypnosis is *much* more than making someone dance like a chicken on a stage; and (2) many scientists are beginning to move away from dogmatic materialism to a more open-minded philosophical position that recognizes the role played by the

mind in the healing arts.

Examples from the annals of medicine amply illustrate the power of hypnosis. Dr. Dabney Ewin of Tulane University in New Orleans, for instance, used it in the emergency treatment of burns. He learned that for the best results, the sooner a burn victim was hypnotized, the better. The reason for this is that when someone suffers a burn, there are two stages to the ensuing damage: the first consists of the initial damage caused by the heat; the second is an inflammatory response by the body, which leads to swelling and pain. Because the latter stage can take up to twenty-four hours to begin, a hypnotist can intervene in the interim to block it by using the power of suggestion. As the author Guy Playfair related:

> [Dr. Ewin] produced photographs of the damage done to a patient's arm after an explosion of acetylene—which burns at 3,000 degrees Centigrade. Within an hour of the accident, he had hypnotized the man, implanted the suggestion of feeling cool and comfortable, dressed the wound and sent him back to work. The following day, the skin was still charred, but there was no swelling, no infection, and above all no pain. The arm was completely healed in twelve days.[88]

A second example is provided by the French psychiatrist Dr. Leon Chertok. In 1975 he showed that the power of hypnotic suggestion is not only capable of healing wounds, but also *causing* them. He was able to produce a large blister on a patient's arm by placing a coin on it and suggesting, under hypnosis, that it was very hot, which was not the case. The patient reported feeling no sensation of heat whatsoever, but her skin reacted as if something hot *had* come into contact with it on the very spot the coin had been placed. This is a perfect demonstration of the power of mind. We are immediately reminded of the Swami Rama's contention that it is the subconscious mind that controls the body. Could it be that hypnosis functions like a concentrated form of meditation, allowing us to do in mere hours what the swami was able to do only after years of training? It

certainly looks that way.

We know that hypnosis has the ability to unlock parts of the mind that many thought were beyond reach. Even mainstream medical researchers are now on board in this regard, and as the studies continue to pile up the evidence, we're sure more and more people will realize just how powerful a healing approach hypnosis truly is. But is it possible that hypnosis can help us even more? Can it take us to the more elevated regions of consciousness where only the great mystics and gurus of the world have journeyed in the past, allowing us to experience higher consciousness for ourselves, just as they did? According to a number of pioneering psychologists and hypnotherapists, the answer to that question is yes.

It usually takes years of meditation to develop a high level of personal serenity and detachment from one's own inner mental processes—achievements that are considered key steps on the path to personal development and enlightenment by most mystical traditions, including the swami's. A good hypnotherapist can sometimes produce such results in mere hours. Research suggests that hypnosis derives its power to induce such benign mental states from its ability to shut down, or at least calm, the part of the mind that is responsible for critical analysis. By doing so, access is opened up to the subconscious, which the hypnotherapist then retrains by planting suggestions that produce desirable behavioral changes. Exactly *how* hypnosis does all this has never been clearly understood, but this is unsurprising, given that consciousness itself is still largely a mystery. Western scientists have tended to reduce it to mere chemical processes in the brain, a situation that has led to the popping of champagne corks in Big Pharma boardrooms worldwide. But regardless of the nature of the precise underlying "mechanisms" that allow hypnotists to successfully practice their art, bypassing the patient's analytical side is critical to the process, as the analytical mind sometimes functions as an annoying gatekeeper who gets in the way of the attempt to lead a healthy, well-balanced life. Sometimes it can interfere so much that self-destructive tendencies result, something very much in evidence across the width and breadth of the Western world, where destruction has been a highly regarded art form for

the last several millennia.

Now, here's the really interesting thing. The subconscious not only controls most of the physical systems that make up the body, but it also functions as a vast archive of memories, something akin to the mind's internal hard drive. Hypnosis functions as a type of password—an "Open Sesame," if you will—that allows you and your hypnotherapist to access all that stored information. In this way, hypnosis functions like your own personal remote control device. It allows you to hit rewind on the documentary film that your busy little mind has been creating all these years, enabling you to view memories so old you've consciously forgotten them. This has been achieved so many times with so many people that it's beyond debate.

When hypnotherapists first learned how to do this, they quickly realized they had the power to help people reach far backward into their personal history and correct unwanted behavior at the very point in time when it had first arisen. Using specialized induction techniques (which differ considerably from practitioner to practitioner), they pried open the subconscious mind in ways that Freud and Jung had only dreamed possible. As we have already seen, the range of practical cures this enabled them to perform was considerable, from healing broken bones to overcoming stage fright, and from quitting smoking to improving one's speed as a world-class sprinter. Nowadays, Olympic athletes use hypnosis to improve their performance; world leaders use it to steady their nerves; and multinationals incorporate it into their training platforms. But although all these uses are impressive, none has quite the same psychological impact as the use of hypnosis as a tool to explore the realm of memory.

Called regression hypnosis, this involves accessing the subconscious mind's immense warehouse of memories. A skilled practitioner can take a person right back to the earliest memories of childhood—memories forgotten by the conscious mind and seemingly lost forever. And this is where things get *really* fascinating—and controversial. Because hypnotherapists rapidly learned *that there was no limit to how far back they could get someone to go*. If they hypnotized someone and returned them to

early childhood, the subject would remember experiences that in many cases could later be confirmed by investigation. But if they asked a subject to return to a time *before* they were born, the subject would do that too! Moreover, this was not a just a one-off freak occurrence that was experienced by only a few people. Such past-life memories have been recalled by *thousands* of individuals. Furthermore, some of the facts that surfaced during such regression sessions were later confirmed through research. A typical regression experience might, say, involve a woman who remembers a life as a soldier killed in the Battle of Gettysburg, along with the name of his wife, children, and hometown; she gets out of the hypnotherapist's chair, goes home, and then, through research, discovers that all these people had actually existed. Had she somehow picked up all this information subconsciously, and then transformed it into a "memory"? Such an explanation doesn't adequately account for either the degree of clarity with which such memories are recalled, or the raw emotional power they hold for the person reliving them. If a random historical fact pops into your head "accidentally" from a book, are you *really* going to experience the trauma associated with it? This seems farfetched. Also, such an explanation wears thin when complex life situations are remembered that the person had never read or heard about; how can a fact slip into one's mind when that mind has never been exposed to it?

So what in the world was happening? Were the memories somehow manufactured by the imagination? If so, how could the incredible vividness of such experiences be explained? The typical person undergoing regression cannot distinguish, qualitatively, between a past-life memory and a present-life memory. They both seem *equally* real, equally plausible, equally their own. They both seem, in a sense, *interchangeable*. Yet the same person can easily distinguish between a memory and a dream, and between a memory and a fantasy. Why should we leap to the conclusion that something a person recognizes as a personal memory from another life is any different? Those who do past-life hypnosis rarely emerge from the process believing that what they just encountered was less real than other life experiences. Can we allow for the possibility that hypnosis is capable of opening up a

doorway that is normally closed—a doorway to another existence entirely? As incredible as it sounds, some hypnotherapists believe that's exactly what is going on.

Let's hear what Dr. Michael Newton, a pioneering hypnotherapist who practiced in California, had to say on the subject. On one occasion, he was using regression hypnosis on a man who had suffered a lifetime of chronic pain on his right side. As Newton explained: "One of the tools of hypnotherapy to manage pain is directing the subject to make the pain worse so he or she can also learn to lessen the aching and thus acquire control. In one of our sessions involving pain intensification, this man used the imagery of being stabbed to recreate his torment." Suddenly inspired, Newton decided to use hypnotic regression to search for the origins of the image the man himself had spontaneously chosen. He was surprised at what he discovered. While in a state of trance, the man revealed that the image came from his own life—*not the life he was leading at that time, but a previous life*, one in which he had been a soldier who had been stabbed during combat. As Newton relates:

> I eventually uncovered his former life as a World War I soldier who was killed by a bayonet in France, and we were able to eliminate the pain altogether. With encouragement from my clients, I began to experiment with moving some of them further back in time before their last birth on Earth…. It didn't take long before I realized our deep-seated memories offer a set of past experiences which are too real and connected to be ignored. I came to appreciate just how therapeutically important the link is between the bodies and events of our former lives and who we are today.[89]

Shortly afterwards, Newton made another quantum leap. He soon learned that hypnosis afforded him and his clients even more than just a glimpse of their past lives, however important that glimpse was.

> Then I stumbled on to a discovery of enormous proportions. I

> found it was possible to see into the spirit world through the mind's eye of a hypnotized subject who could report back to me of life *between* lives on Earth.

The objection to such a revelation, of course, is that his clients were indulging in fantasies concocted by their imagination—that they were, in short, just making it all up. In response, Newton says this:

> Some critics of hypnosis believe a subject in trance will fabricate memories and bias their responses in order to adopt any theoretical framework suggested by the hypnotist. I find this generalization to be a false premise… I learned the value of careful cross-examination early in my work, and I found no evidence of anyone faking their spiritual experiences to please me. In fact, subjects in hypnosis are not hesitant in correcting my misinterpretations of their statements.

Furthermore:

> People in hypnosis are neither dreaming nor hallucinating. We don't dream in chronological sequences nor hallucinate in a directed trance state.

Tellingly, although his clients came from highly varied backgrounds, from the very religious to the very non-religious, Newton discovered that once they were regressed back into the soul state, their reports displayed remarkable consistency. Following death, multiple subjects reported the so-called tunnel effect often recounted by those who have experienced NDEs. The newly freed soul sees a bright light, either near or afar, and eventually enters it. There is typically an experience of weightlessness, euphoria, and a feeling of profound freedom. Spirits also typically leave their host bodies moments before bodily death, to spare themselves the agony of that final moment of physical existence. They then feel a tugging or magnetic

sensation that pulls them into the light, though often not until they have spent time either observing the scene of their death or experiencing frustration as they attempt, usually unsuccessfully, to contact loved ones. As Newton relates:

> There is one basic reason for many spirits not wanting to immediately leave the place of their physical death. This comes from a desire to mentally reach out to comfort loved ones before progressing further into the spirit world.

The other basic elements, repeated again and again by multiple clients, also exhibit a surprising homogeneity: (1) A type of "soul amnesia" blocks those on the physical plane from remembering their previous lives; its purpose is to allow souls to focus on their current life, not the past, and it is only capable of being circumvented when it's necessary to effect healing; (2) loved ones or spirit guides meet the soul following its departure from the body; (3) a period of life review occurs in which the soul recaps its life on the physical plane; (4) a healing period ensues; and (5) preparation begins for the next life. This latter period includes choosing the key elements that will dominate the next life, such as the appropriate body, family, life scenario, occupation, challenges, etc. The amount of information Newton was able to elicit during his "interrogation" of clients is extremely broad and multilayered, so it's impossible to do it justice here. Before moving on, however, we should take note of one particularly salient aspect of the "life between lives" segment of human existence, at least according to this particular hypnotherapist: we will all be judged for what we did during our life on Earth. As Newton states:

> Everybody is held accountable for their past lives. Performance is judged upon how each individual interpreted and acted upon their life roles.

The burning question, of course, is this: what should we make of such

forays into the subconscious? Should we reject them outright as merely the constructions of the mind, or should we take them seriously, at least to some extent? Those who have directly experienced regression therapy, however, rarely ask such questions, for when they come face to face with a life lived in, say, the 18th century, it is as real as anything they have experienced in their *current* life—so real that hypnotists need to take special precautions to ensure that their clients maintain a safe psychological distance from the sometimes traumatic events being re-experienced. This is accomplished, once again, through the use of suggestion. Those undergoing regression are gently reminded that they can watch the proceedings from a safe distance, as an outside observer would, without being affected by what they see or hear.

This has huge therapeutic benefit, because the individual being re-exposed to painful memories of traumatic events is able to neutralize or overcome the negative effects of such incidents, allowing them to put their experiences in perspective and help them lead a more balanced life. While some hypnotherapists are quite coy about commenting on the reality, or lack thereof, of the experiences encountered in regression, others openly proclaim their belief that the patients in question are accessing real lives that were lived in the distant past, long before their present lives began.

What about verification? Can the details that emerge about alleged past lives be confirmed or validated?

Well, in the case of the life between lives period identified by Newton and others, the answer is obviously not: we can hardly transport a laboratory into an entirely different dimension and perform the necessary verification procedures. But it may surprise some of our readers to learn that there has been a great deal of intriguing research into an area of inquiry that *can* help us make up our minds on this whole past life regression question—and that area of inquiry is reincarnation.

Dr. Ian Stevenson, chair of the University of Virginia's department of psychiatry for over a decade, spent much of his life researching the question of reincarnation, traveling around the world to vet claims and gather evidence. He and other investigators collected numerous cases of children

who reported memories from previous lives. In many cases, his team was able to confirm that specific details provided by the children did in fact correspond with the lives of real people who had passed away before the children were born. While many of the published cases were of children in Asian countries, where reincarnation is a widely held belief, some were also documented in North America, where belief in reincarnation is rare and parents typically don't take their children's past-life memories seriously.

In her 2017 book, *Surviving Death: A Journalist Investigates Evidence for an Afterlife*, Leslie Kean reviewed some of the more persuasive evidence for reincarnation, specifically focusing on Stevenson's work and the work of his successor at the University of Virginia, child psychiatrist Jim Tucker. Between Tucker, Stevenson, psychologist Erlendur Haraldsonn and a small number of other researchers, nearly three thousand cases have now been studied world-wide: *in two-thirds of them, a previous person was identified whose life matched the statements made by the child in question*. This by itself is a stunning find that has been underreported by the Western media, for obvious reasons: most newspapers in the West adopt a strictly secular stance that automatically filters out anything that seems "too spiritual." But the evidence for reincarnation is compelling: a boy in the US, for example, could remember startling details about his previous life as a World War II fighter pilot, including the names and nicknames of his fellow pilots; a girl in India remembered numerous details about her previous life in another city, including the names and professions of her former family members, along with the location of their home and the fact it contained an iron safe and a sword on the wall. Accentuating the problems faced by researchers attempting to verify such claims is the fact that children's memories of previous lives tend to fade after about age nine. Nevertheless, Stevenson and the other researchers confirmed case after case, matching the claims made by small children with individuals either alive or dead. As Tucker pointed out:

> Along with statements and behaviors, many of the cases include physically tangible signs of a connection to a past life. Some of the

> children have birthmarks that match wounds, usually the fatal wounds, on the body of the previous person. They are often unusual in some way, in shape or size or by being puckered or raised rather than flat…. Overall, we have four hundred cases in which the child had a birthmark or birth defect that corresponded to a fatal wound the previous person suffered.[90]

Taken in isolation, it might be possible to brush off one or two such claims as the result of an amazing coincidence; it becomes more difficult as the claims begin to number in the thousands. Rejecting the idea of past lives becomes even more daunting, however, when the evidence for reincarnation is combined with the accounts of those who have done regression or had a near-death experience, as both have generated remarkably consistent descriptions of a "higher plane" of existence. Once we take into account the whole spectrum of evidence, what emerges is a robust argument in favor of the survival hypothesis and reincarnation.

But if you're still unconvinced, there's more—in the form of an experiment conducted by a team led by Dr. Gary Schwartz, whose credentials as a scientist are impeccable. He and other researchers decided to put a number of well-known psychic mediums to the test to see if they could do what they claimed to be able to do, which is talk to the dead. The results were illuminating, to say the least.

When we say Schwartz has impeccable research credentials, we might be guilty of an understatement. After earning an MA at Cambridge and a Ph.D. in psychology at Harvard, he served as a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Yale, where he was the director of the Yale Psychophysiology Clinic. He is the author of more than 400 scientific papers and eleven scientific books. If you could choose anyone in the world to set up a well-structured research project to look into the questions we've been considering here, he would have to be near the top of the list.

The multiple precautions taken by Schwartz and his research team to prevent fraud were thorough. After consulting with professional magicians and other scientists, they developed an array of preventative measures to

protect the integrity of their experiment. For example, the mediums had "no way of knowing anything about the sitter—not the name, not even the sex, age bracket, background, city of residence, or any other details."[91] In addition, "the sitter was placed in a chair directly behind the medium, who therefore could not gain clues from the physical appearance nor from any reactions of the sitter to the medium's statements." After taking these steps, he asked the participating psychics to do what they normally do: tell people (i.e., the sitters mentioned above) about their dead relatives. The result?

> [The mediums] provided a very large amount of data [that] was absolutely accurate. In [one of our studies], one medium in particular, Suzane Northrop…reported more than 120 pieces of information that were rated over 80% accurate… The medium's accuracy was astonishing.[92]

Furthermore:

> Our experiments provided replication by having sitters read by as many as five mediums… The findings showed remarkable replication across mediums and sitters, and across experiments, as well… Guessing and chance cannot account for the accuracy of the information being provided.

Although each experiment was more stringent than the last, the accuracy of the mediums did not diminish by a significant margin. Despite all the precautions taken by researchers to protect the integrity of their research, the mediums were still able to supply a great deal of accurate information about the dead relatives of the sitters who participated. But although remarkable, this was hardly the first time mediums have passed muster: recall the case of Eileen Garrett, which we reviewed earlier. As Elizabeth Keane noted about similar research in the past:

> Research into mental mediumship shows that a small percentage of

> mediums do have a genuine ability to access…precise information under controlled conditions. Their results cannot be explained away as fraud, chance, cold reading, or simple guesswork, because under the proper controls, these explanations can be ruled out.[93]

Schwartz clearly has provided powerful evidence in favor of the so-called survival hypothesis—namely, that consciousness is independent of the physical body and survives its destruction. Together with all the other evidence we have surveyed in connection with near-death experiences, reincarnation and psi activity in general, what we are left with is a powerful case in support of life continuing beyond physical death.

Now is the time to get our passports stamped, because we are truly entering a new country—Swedenborg territory, you might say, a realm of ghosts and spirits, one that had supposedly been banished by Western science over two centuries ago. But had it ever *truly* been banished, even from the minds of scientists? As we have seen, the founders of modern science were far from being atheists. Neither Newton nor Einstein made the slightest effort to urge people to banish religion. Charles Townes was a Christian until his dying breath; he never felt that religion interfered with his development of the maser or laser, two inventions that changed the course of history. We could pause to recap what we've already said about the other scientists who fit the same profile, but let it suffice, instead, to say that for many of the world's foremost scientists and thinkers, *spirituality was never viewed as a problem that stood in the way of science*. Though they held different views on religion, Townes and Einstein both saw science and religion as complementary, *not* opposing, forces. In the case of famed mathematician Ramanujan, religion wasn't just complementary, but fully integrated into his scientific practices: he saw his goddess as being capable of directly providing insight into the most complex mathematical problems imaginable. The consequence, for him, were breakthroughs so profound that it took others in his field decades to catch up. Now, if that's what you get when you cross spirituality with science, what's the problem? Most scientists would give anything to be on the receiving end of such

revelations.

This is not to say that we are recommending that all scientists turn themselves into Upanishad-toting mystics (though it didn't hurt Ramanujan, Schrödinger or Schopenhauer). It's just a reminder that we shouldn't let cultural biases shut down our capacity to find insight in unorthodox places—like the hypnotherapist's chair, the meditation mat, poetry, the park bench or even scripture. And it's very clear, in retrospect, that much of the belief in the supposed animosity between science and religion is based on just that: cultural bias. That bias is rooted in the sociopolitical wars that originated in England, France and North America during the Scientific Revolution, and which continue today, often in the form of hysterical accusations from extremists on both ends of the political spectrum.

Non-European countries are more tolerant of both religion and the paranormal for this very reason: they largely escaped the cultural clashes that produced such virulent anti-religious sentiment among some members of the scientific fraternity. The result, as far as the exploration of spiritual and psi-related topics go, is obvious. Although many scientists *are* spiritual or believers in the reality of psi (or both), they're smart enough to keep that to themselves. If they were open about their beliefs, it would change not just the high school science textbooks, but also the wider world outside our schools and universities. Most people are shocked to learn that many famous scientists had a spiritual bent; imagine what would happen if the general public learned that many among science's rank and file also consider themselves to be spiritual in some fashion, but that they are afraid of speaking out?

We bring this up merely to encourage readers to continue to explore such topics with the full freedom that comes from having an open mind and an enquiring heart. Once we push away the knee-jerk objections born of centuries of cultural bias and patriarchal one-sidedness, the door to the deepest experiences humans are capable of—the door cracked opened by Targ, the Rhines, Stevenson and others—begins to open wide.

We have already seen compelling evidence for psi activity, which means that the contention put forth by Gödel and others—namely, that human

consciousness isn't limited to the brain—is equally compelling. Not only that, but thanks to the mounting evidence from NDEs and research by Ian Stevenson and his intellectual descendants, it's become clear that the survival hypothesis is, at the very least, a very strong possibility. In fact, we would argue it's far more than that, given the huge number of people who have had these experiences and who have had specific details from their past lives validated by independent researchers. Now, given all this, what would seem more likely? That the experiences of Dr. Michael Newton's past-life regression subjects are rubbish? Or that they might contain important insights that we would be wise to heed?

We choose the latter. You, of course, can and will choose for yourself. Before proceeding, however, we would only like to add one more thing. It takes the form of an old piece of advice that originated with the 17th century French mathematician, scientist and inventor, Blaise Pascal. Another one of our mystical scientists, he made important contributions to not only the study of geometry and mathematics, but also hydraulics and probability theory. (Oh, and he was also prone to religious visions and dreams.) Being a mystic who was also very good with numbers, he took the age-old question of whether we should believe in God and did something no one had ever done before: he framed it in terms of a cost-benefit analysis! In what came to be called Pascal's Wager, he argued that it's *smarter* to believe in God: if you turn out to be right, your reward is Heaven; whereas if you turn out to be wrong, well, you haven't lost much at all. In other words, you're making a bet in which the payoff could be huge, and the loss only minor. Conversely, he argued that if you decide *not* to believe in God, and you turn out to be mistaken, there could be nasty consequences (hellfire, damnation, weird-looking people with pitchforks running around your post-life neighborhood, etc.).

Now, let's be clear. We're not telling you to believe in God. That's not our style. Instead, we suggest modifying Pascal's Wager for the modern world, turning it into this: *there is a much bigger potential reward for keeping your mind open about reincarnation, psi and the afterlife than keeping it closed*. Call it Voltaire's Wager. The smart money is on people

who have open minds regarding NDEs, psi, and related topics, whereas a closed mind could actually have negative consequences.

How so? Recall, if you will, what we have said about the observer effect. What you experience after you leave this plane of awareness could be at least partly affected by your belief system. *In other words, what you believe could influence your next reality*. If you believe in Hell, you may end up there—at least for a while (presumably, since you're not the only soul in the afterlife, you'll only be able to partly influence your reality). Similarly, if you believe in nothing at all, that may be your future for an *uncomfortably* long time. For if you *are* able to leave your brain behind at death, and it turns out that your mind *does* become far more powerful once you have—well, you know the old saying.

Be careful what you wish for.

Your beliefs could become a type of prison, especially if your mind is so inflexible that it won't allow new ideas or experiences to filter in. In effect, keeping your mind closed could be one of the worst bets you ever make. Keeping it open, however, could allow you to win the spiritual equivalent of the lottery, giving you a freer hand at creating a post-physical paradise and granting you a better chance at encountering the higher levels of intelligence reported by every mystic in history who was worthy of the name.

After all, who's to say?

This leads us to the next segment in our book. If you're prepared to take our little wager, you might find what follows intriguing. For the last twenty years, one of our co-authors—Linda Bos, a practicing hypnotherapist specializing in regression—has used hypnosis to help hundreds of people explore their past and change their present. Some have taken the time to validate their regression experiences through research; others are satisfied with simply experiencing the sheer power of what they encounter while in the trance state and leaving it at that, without feeling the need to take further action. All the people you will meet in the case studies selected for inclusion in this book had deeply profound interactions with their subconscious minds, allowing them to overcome seemingly insurmountable

problems and live more fully in the present. During regression, many of them encountered what they believed were events from previous lives. But were they, in fact, past lives that her clients re-experienced? Or were they merely figments of their imagination?

Well, that's a wager that each of them—and each of us—must make alone.

II
Case Studies

Our clients' problem is that they have lost rapport with their unconscious minds. Our job is to help restore that relationship.
— Milton Erickson, world-renowned hypnotherapist

* * *

The people you will meet on the following pages are all real people. Theirs are true stories, but their names and some minor details about their lives have been changed to protect their privacy. Please note that although Linda made extensive notes both before and after the regression sessions in question, small deviations could exist between reconstructed dialogue and the actual conversations that took place. This is unavoidable, but does not detract from the validity of their accounts.

* * *

Introduction

Before we introduce our case studies, let's first deal with a few popular misconceptions about hypnosis. To begin with, there is a great deal of difference between stage hypnosis and clinical hypnosis. Most people are familiar with the former, as it involves someone hypnotizing volunteers from an audience and then getting them to do funny things like strutting around like a chicken, dancing to music only they can hear or simply falling asleep on command. The result is highly entertaining, particularly if the participant looks ill-suited for the role: a prototypical jock dancing up a storm is much more of a spectacle than, say, someone who looks like she just stepped out of a disco. But we should be careful about what we conclude from the basis of what is done on stage: such hypnotists are adept at picking out people from the audience who *want* to perform in public. Whereas it looks like the participants are doing what they do involuntarily, as if they are mere puppets in the hands of the hypnotist, the reality is different: no one can be made to do something under hypnosis. You have to agree to do it, at least subconsciously. That means that the jock doing the funky chicken *wants* to do the funky chicken, and the woman who falls asleep instantly when the hypnotist snaps his fingers wants to do that, too. In all types of hypnosis, there is a fundamental, underlying sense of cooperation between the hypnotist and the hypnotized, even if that cooperation isn't apparent to an outside observer.

Unfortunately, because of the success of stage acts, in the popular mind hypnosis has become associated with more malevolent practices like brainwashing and mind control. In reality, this is far from the case, unless it is a type of brainwashing that people administer on themselves. The "B movie" image we have of zombies walking around vacantly with their hands outstretched, mumbling inanities, has nothing to do with hypnosis and everything to do with Hollywood. So is the image of the hypnotist's pocket watch dangling from a chain while the hypnotist says "you are

feeling very sleepy." This is another Hollywood artifact, one inspired by Mesmerism, a somewhat related therapeutic system developed by the 19th century psychologist F.A. Mesmer. It employs different techniques from modern hypnosis and shouldn't be considered anything more than a distant cousin.

So what *is* modern hypnotism? Well, as mentioned earlier, hypnotism is a method of bypassing the analytical side of the mind in order to access the subconscious; it uses a variety of techniques (called inductions) to induce the hypnotic or trance state, following which the hypnotherapist will use the power of suggestion to bring about changes in behavior. And here we arrive at another misconception. Many think the trance state is either a sleep-like state or an unconscious state, almost like a coma, but this isn't the case. In truth, the trance state is a type of waking state that everyone experiences on a regular basis. Daydreaming is an example of trance, as is the relaxed state one enters just before and after sleep. You may fall asleep while daydreaming or in a trance state, but that doesn't mean the one is the same as the other. Personally, I sometimes feel more aware while in a trance state than in my normal state of wakefulness, as my mind is active but unusually relaxed. *What hypnosis does is deliberately utilize and lengthen the trance state in order to achieve specific aims*. It does this by using inductions designed to relax a subject and facilitate trance. While in trance, the mind does undergo changes, but there is never loss of control, so throw the zombie stereotype out the window. You are conscious while in the trance state, just relaxed and suggestible, conditions that allow the hypnotherapist to guide you on your journey into the subconscious.

It has long been known that while in this state, people can retrieve old memories, learn new behavioral patterns, rid themselves of phobias and even overcome serious medical conditions. Earlier in this book, we saw how studies at Harvard and elsewhere conclusively demonstrated that hypnosis can do astounding things, like speed up the body's ability to mend broken bones and greatly reduce the pain experienced from chronic medical conditions. We also saw how hypnosis can have psi-related applications. Eileen Garrett used hypnosis so as to move more quickly into the trance

state. Hypnosis is also used by martial artists and other athletes to increase their mental focus. In sum, hypnosis is a way of using the mind's natural ability to process and remember information in order to help people change their behavior, shift their outlooks and heal or otherwise change their bodies. As we have seen, it has the ability to influence bodily functions that previously were thought to be outside conscious control (mending bones and healing skin disorders being prime examples). It is not magic, but its effectiveness is so great as to almost look magical at times, at least from the perspective of the analytical mind, but then again, in order for hypnosis to work, the analytical mind has to have been temporarily set aside, so you'll have to excuse it for being a little surprised at the powerful changes hypnosis can achieve when it's temporarily absent from the scene.

As for induction techniques, they come in all shapes and sizes, and many hypnotherapists don't like revealing them—not because they're trade secrets, but because some believe their effectiveness is reduced if a subject knows the technique in advance. Famous induction techniques include having subjects imagine themselves walking slowly, step by step, down a stairway or descending, floor by floor, in an elevator. When visualized, such slow, measured movement can have a powerful effect as far as getting patients to enter a relaxed state. Also important is getting subjects to focus on their own breathing: this takes them inward, into the realm of the subconscious, where all the good stuff awaits. Organized around these basic visualizations there are, of course, thousands of potential variations. The speed at which subjects descend into the trance state will largely depend on two factors: the ability of the hypnotherapist to fashion a suitable induction, and a subject's own ability to "catch on." Subjects typically get better and better at entering trance, but it almost goes without saying that everyone is different. Obviously, someone who has major trouble with anxiety may have difficulty getting into the trance state, but in my experience, almost everyone can be hypnotized: it's just a question of time and focus. Those who are willing to do the work—for hypnosis is, as I have said, a joint effort by both hypnotist and hypnotized—will almost always be rewarded, and sometimes in surprising ways. The simple truth is that we spend so

much time *analyzing* that we tend to ignore other aspects of our being: we neglect our non-analytical side so much that it's almost as if we're living inside our bodies with a complete stranger, one who goes by a variety of names, like the subconscious, the unconscious, the superconscious, intuition, and so on. My job as a hypnotherapist is to help people get reacquainted with that part of themselves. I make the introduction; they shake hands and get to know each other better. Suddenly both sides of the human being sitting in my hypnotherapy chair are in a position to work together instead of being at odds. They're now part of a team, rather than two armies at war—and the latter is something I've witnessed so many times I sometimes wonder how civilization is even able to function. On the surface, while my clients profess to have another reason to come see me—to quit smoking or lose weight, for instance—the vast majority of people come to me because, at bottom, they want that internal war to end so their lives can get back on track. In other words, they seek peace, harmony and forward movement—something my brand of spiritual hypnosis is well suited to provide.

One of my biggest challenges is to explain what I do to people who are overly analytical. To those who are spiritual in inclination or who have had direct experience with psychic phenomena, it's much easier. I often find out later that the latter individuals are old souls who have been healers in their past lives; their minds have no difficulty grasping the idea that we exist on multiple levels at once, that they have been here before, and that there is a higher plane of existence than this one. But the ones who have the hardest time coming to terms with this are what I call "intellectualizers." They're typically very good at things like math and the sciences (left brain activities), and not so good at things like empathy, art or understanding emotions (right brain activities). The latter activities require emotional intelligence and the ability to read both themselves and others—intuitive skills, in other words. I was surprised to learn that famous mathematicians like Gödel and Ramanujan were able to fuse their spiritual and analytical sides, as it's been my experience that most people are dominated by one side or the other; it's heartening to see it's possible to embrace both.

As mentioned earlier, the vast majority of people can be hypnotized, but since the very process of getting into a hypnotic state involves the bypassing of the analytical side, some people have a more difficult time. Usually, it's those people who need my services the most. Their personal lopsidedness, if I can call it that, has often caused them great difficulties in the past, for the analytical abilities that provide them a great advantage in a professional capacity can be a great disadvantage when it comes to other important aspects of life. Sometimes they have become so out of touch with their own inner emotional landscapes that they feel like strangers in a strange land, particularly when life's big events—a death in the family, divorce, financial trouble—come knocking at their door. In my first book, *Between Two Worlds: a Healing Journey Through Time*, I used the example of one of my clients, a wealthy Scottish-Canadian man, to illustrate what happens when someone's inner emotional life becomes out of balance: although he seemingly had everything you could want in life (money, material possessions, status), he was so painfully shy among women that he was completely unable to find love. When he came to me, he was at his wit's end: life had given him everything but someone to truly share it with. Now that he was in his 70s, he was afraid he would die alone because of his toxic shyness. His spiritual journey began the moment he sat down in my chair. With the help of regression, he was able to learn that as a young child he had experienced incredible trauma: he had fallen into a fireplace, suffered terrible burns, and subsequently been adopted by his grandmother. He had grown up knowing nothing of his mother, his earlier trauma, or the reason for the scar on his face. But hypnosis brought it all back—under safe and controlled conditions, of course—and a trip to Scotland provided verification that what he had re-experienced in my chair *had* happened. It wasn't the product of his imagination. He even hired a barrister to dig through local hospital records and confirm everything he had learned through regression. His terrible ordeal had been kept secret from him for his entire life. Once he learned the truth, it was like a tremendous weight had been lifted off his shoulders. His shyness around women disappeared along with it, and he soon found himself in a loving relationship. In his case, he

didn't need to return to a past life to find the source of his trouble; revisiting early childhood sufficed. But the process of doing past-life regression is exactly the same.

In many cases the source of a person's trouble isn't in this lifetime at all. In such instances, the individuals doing regression in my chair will suddenly find themselves face to face with scenes from lives that seem both new and strangely familiar at the same time. They are simultaneously flooded with knowledge about that lifetime, knowledge that comes to them in *precisely* the same way as knowledge of their current lifetime does, and without any question marks attached. Since they are wide awake when this occurs, and able to communicate with me, they tell me what they are seeing or sensing; I help guide them throughout the entire process, though always without putting words in their mouths or ideas in their minds. Some of my clients, having experienced regression, do what the Scottish man did: they try to verify what they have seen by digging through historical records. Sometimes they are successful, sometimes not. History doesn't record everything, after all. In one case, a woman learned through regression that in a previous life she had been a high-ranking military man responsible for war planning. After being shown the man's nameplate and uniform several times during the regression process, she took it upon herself to check whether a man with that name and rank had ever existed: she found out one had. But she was lucky in this regard: first, she had specific information of the sort that isn't always made available in regression, for the simple reason that it's not *necessary* to have such a level of detail to make forward progress in life. And that's the purpose of regression. It's not to provide entertainment or proof of a past existence: it's to help people heal from past trauma or gain a better understanding about what's needed to more fully evolve. Details like the ones she received are gravy. She also hit the jackpot in another way: she was able to find records that confirmed what she had seen. As anyone who has struggled doing genealogical research knows, historical records from decades or centuries ago are usually woefully incomplete and often no longer exist.

Earlier, we saw that some researchers—notably Ian Stevenson—have

been successful, against all odds, in confirming claims about reincarnation. Interestingly, however, many who actually re-experience past life events during hypnotic regression feel no need to verify what they have learned. It's so vivid an experience that it would be like feeling the need to verify something you can clearly remember doing yesterday. Why bother? Furthermore, it has often been pointed out that when someone experiences a powerful psi-related event—let's say a near-death experience—typically it is described as *more* real than anything else they have ever experienced: more real than any memory, more real than any document pulled from a dusty old archive, even more real than their current reality. Is that even possible? I, for one, believe it is. This "hyperreality" is in fact a very old notion. The idea that there is a higher plane of existence that is somehow "more real" than our own is found throughout ancient religion and philosophy: our plane is like a shadow world compared to the world described by the mystics and prophets of ages past. On rare occasions, I have been lucky enough to personally experience this higher level of reality: it's not something I will ever forget, nor is it something I would ever question. It would be like questioning whether water is wet. Once you've had actually such an experience, verification is irrelevant. In a way, you'd be farther ahead trying to verify whether you're really reading this book.

When I first read about Eileen Garrett, I immediately felt a strong kinship with her. Not only am I also part Irish, but her experiences as a child spoke to me deeply. I, too, was able to see dead people when I was young; they used to tell me things that I would later ask my mother about. Invariably, I discovered that the dead (usually my relatives) had been telling the truth. When I became older and more drawn into the affairs of the material world, for a time I stopped seeing ghosts quite so frequently, but I still retained the ability to access information from that realm. I refer to this process as a "download," because, as I explained in my first book, it's a lot like there's a computer up there in the clouds sending me bursts of data. People will walk into my office for the first time, and very often before they arrive, a download will come, and I'll suddenly know why they're there and what's troubling them. Sometimes I'll wait for them to tell me; sometimes I'll tell

them the moment they walk in the door. To me this is a completely natural process that I don't have think about. In those moments, I don't strategize about my approach; I just wait for intuition to tell me what to do, and then I do it. Occasionally this gets me into trouble, as sometimes the person I'm meeting that day is expecting to talk about, say, tobacco addiction, and I'll start talking to them about a close friend or family member who passed away the previous year, someone I'd never met or heard of. The smoking problem is often an excuse their subconscious used to get them through my door. They're really there for something else—usually a spiritual shift—but because their analytical minds are almost always full of resistance to such ideas, a ruse is needed to prod them in the right direction. I don't create the ruse; their subconscious does. I'm just happy they're there. A part of them —their higher self, you might say—pushed them into my office. It's my belief, born of experience, that we are all guided by a higher intelligence; the problem is that our ears are usually closed to its advice. Sometimes it has to resort to tricks to get us to do things that are in our best interests (and, alas, it sometimes fails at the task, because we've stopped listening). I am frequently amazed at the subtle ways in which this occurs—and at the greener pastures this process can lead us to, if we only open up to its messages.

Before we move on to our case studies, I just want to add one more thing. Although we do not live in very spiritual times, it is still possible to lead a spiritual life. By this I mean that the higher plane of which I speak is something that we can all connect with from time to time, if only we take the trouble to reduce the noise of modern life. This connection could take place in our dreams, in sudden bursts of insight, or in powerful feelings that flood over us during liminal events such as funerals, weddings or even crises. Our civilization is not one that promotes or nurtures such inner experiences—it would much rather we put our efforts into buying and selling stuff rather than feeling and intuiting—but beneath society's materialist veneer there still exists an underlying spiritual power that we all can touch from time to time. However, this will never be accomplished through merely intellectual means. For us to truly flower in this world, heart

and mind must harmonize. We need to become much better at *listening*—not just to others, but to ourselves. By this I don't mean listening to our usual internal dialogue, because for the most part that's just the endless chitter-chatter of the monkey mind inside our heads. To put it another way, that's our analytical mind just taking us for a ride. What I'm talking about is listening to a much subtler source of information—our intuitive side, the source of our creativity, our gut instincts, our inner knowing. Inner harmony, like outer harmony, will greatly facilitate this sort of listening. To detect the soul's subtle messages—for that's what intuition is—a little bit of peace, calm and quiet is absolutely necessary. Civilization, as we know it, is full of noise. It is obsessed with the puffing up of the ego-self. We need to dial down the volume of its bellows in order to hear our higher selves. In this respect, we can all benefit from the advice contained in Albert Einstein's famous formula for happiness: "A calm and modest life," he once wrote, "brings more happiness than the pursuit of success combined with constant restlessness." Our society has put success and restlessness on a pedestal, and I see the end result walking through my door every day: broken people looking to get fixed; lost people looking for light; others who are driven by a deep sense that there's more to life than the things they learned in school. Maybe it's time to tear down that awful pedestal and put up a new one instead. Personally, I think a bronze plaque bearing Einstein's formula would do quite nicely in that regard, but another, more ancient piece of advice also springs to mind. It's an old Irish saying that my mother used to tell me, and although I've heard many variations over the course of my lifetime, it goes something like this:

Take time for the quiet moments,
Because the Gods whisper
And the world is loud.

CASE ONE

“Charles”

Charles (not his real name) was a retired hypnotherapist who had practiced in the field for more than thirty years. But although he’d had a successful career and the sort of happy family life that would be the envy of many, he was still plagued by a deep sense of emptiness, and he couldn’t explain why. He also had a terrible phobia—of flying. Now retired, he and his wife had both the time and the money to fly anywhere in the world, but his fear kept his feet firmly on the ground. Just as he couldn’t explain his emotional hollowness, he also couldn’t explain his fear of flying. A voracious reader, he dearly wanted to explore all the foreign countries he had read about, but it was quite impossible for him to even go near an airport, let alone get in a plane and soar above the clouds. As he got older, things just got worse. He would pick up a vacation brochure and promptly put it down again: it was that much of an emotional hot potato for him. Travel ads on TV were even worse: they would make his stomach churn. Having been a hypnotherapist for over three decades, he knew how effective hypnosis could be in treating phobias, so when he found out that I was giving a workshop focusing on hypnotherapy in general and spiritual regression in specific, something told him he should attend. Immediately after the workshop ended, he approached me and booked a session.

Perhaps because he was such an experienced hypnotherapist (or perhaps just because he was ready), Charles took to regression like a duck to water. As mentioned earlier, some people don’t “get it” right away; they have to practice getting into the trance state before their subconscious is ready to open the doors to a deeper experience. Charles, however, was exceptional. Very shortly after I guided him through an induction, his facial expression changed suddenly, and I heard him take a sharp intake of breath. Then he

said:

"I'm in a plane."

The words were very matter-of-fact, but there was just enough tension in his voice that I knew he was very engaged in the experience. I gently reminded him that he was in a safe place where he could watch everything as an outside observer. Then I said:

"Do you know what kind of a plane, Charles?"

"It's a Lancaster bomber. It's *so* vivid."

"Are you the pilot?"

"No, I'm the gunner—the tail gunner."

"Tell me about your surroundings," I said. "What else can you see or sense? Take your time. There's no rush."

He began to describe the plane in incredible detail, practically down to its nuts and bolts. Once he had painted a picture of the aircraft, I asked him whether he could tell me about himself. That's when the floodgates truly opened. His words came out so fast I barely had time to write them all down, and I pride myself on being able to write very quickly. Reviewing my notes for this book, I was reminded about just how much detail he provided that day. He described himself as a rather slightly built 18-year-old man of French-Canadian descent, with porcelain white skin marred by acne. He had been born in northern Ontario to a farming family that had relocated to Toronto when he was still a young lad. When the war came, he had rushed to volunteer, a decision that had made his mother very unhappy; while in uniform he had written to her many times to describe his daily life while training to be a combatant. Throughout his brief military experience, he felt tremendous guilt at leaving his family and going off to war, as he was the eldest of twelve, with three younger brothers still at home; his family didn't have much money, so his absence had cost them plenty. There was also a girl, his sweetheart back in Toronto: she wore his promise ring, a symbol of their decision to get married and have a family of their own after the war. But although he was conflicted about abandoning his family and leaving his fiancé to await his return, like so many other young men who left for the battlefields of World War II, he loved the excitement: in fact, he

even told me that he loved the scratchy feel of his uniform. In contrast to his current fear of flying, in the lifetime he was re-experiencing in my hypnotherapy chair, he *loved* to fly. It made his spirits soar.

"I'm as high as the clouds," he told me. "I feel invincible—absolutely invincible! Every time I get back from a training session in an airplane, I feel more confident. It's amazing! I feel like a young man who's filling his boots, as they used to say. I'm going to give them all something to talk about when I get home."

Alas, that was not to be—not in this lifetime, anyway. After it reached the point where I felt he had plumbed enough information from the experience, I asked him to move forward in time to an important event, reminding him again that he could observe whatever he saw from a safe distance. He could even float above a scene and watch things unfold that way, if he liked. He was in the driver's seat; he had control. He nodded his assent, and resumed.

"I'm in the Lancaster again. We're flying over Europe—maybe Germany or Belgium, I'm not sure. It's dark, and I can't see the ground. There's a lot of cloud cover."

After a few moments, his facial muscles tightened, and he announced:

"I just heard a huge BANG!"

"You are completely safe," I reminded him. "Can you tell me what happened?"

"There's smoke—lots of smoke. I can't see a thing. I'm starting to panic. We've been hit. We've been hit hard!"

Although his words carried a certain amount of tension initially, his voice calmed down quickly, almost as if he had already processed whatever had happened and emotionally moved on. He proceeded to describe the scene in front of him. The pilot had been injured and was slumped over the controls. The plane was spinning out of control, hurtling toward the ground in a downward spiral. There was so much smoke that he was having difficulty seeing anything. I reminded him gently that he didn't need his eyes to know what was going on; he could just ask for the knowledge to come to him. That seemed to help.

"I'm stuck," he said. "My legs feel like they're burning up, but I can't

move. I'm trapped. This is it. I can't get out. I'm not getting out of this alive."

"Without letting yourself get sucked into the emotion, can you tell me what you're feeling at this moment?"

He paused. "I'm feeling panic. It's intense. It's like my heart is going to explode. But it's crazy, my head is full of all *sorts* of things, all at the same time. I'm thinking about my mama. I'm thinking about my girl. And while I'm thinking about that, I'm also thinking about how great it would be to have a menthol cigarette right now. And now I'm seeing my entire life flashing in front of me like a movie. It's absolutely incredible."

Then he came to the kicker.

"I'm also feeling overwhelming sadness," he added. "Overwhelming, unbelievable sadness."

"Can you tell me why?"

"My hopes and dreams are crashing right into the ground, just like this plane. But not only because of that. It's also because my family back home, my girl—they're going to go through hell because of this, and I can't fix it. I feel powerless. I feel like my heart has broken."

He then felt himself floating up and away from the scene. He watched from high above as the plane crashed into the ground and burst into flames. And at that moment, he realized something—about himself. He came to understand why, in his current lifetime, he had felt so compelled to study the human mind—and to help others use their own minds to fix what was ailing them. He understood, in other words, why he had become a hypnotherapist, and why he had stayed in that career for his entire life, without ever thinking of switching to a new vocation. He also saw, in an extremely vivid way, where his fear of flying had originated. These weren't the only things he learned through regression—there was also a lesson in there about the importance of following your dreams, and another about letting go of guilt—but they were key breakthroughs that served him well once he left my chair and re-entered the world outside my office. Not only did he overcome his fear of flying, but he also went out and earned his pilot's license. As a matter of fact, right now he's spending his retirement

flying small planes in northern Canada, fearlessly delivering supplies to remote communities that depend on people like him to help them survive.

As for validating the historical accuracy of what he had seen in my chair, he was never interested in even pursuing the question. Even though he learned his name and RCAF identification number during hypnotic regression, as well as details like his Toronto family's home phone number and neighborhood, he felt no desire to take matters further. Healing those ancient wounds was enough proof that what he had experienced was real—at least as far as he was concerned. Because in the end, that's the whole point. Healing what is broken within us is its own truth, as it possesses more meaning than practically anything else on earth.

And he had done just that.

CASE TWO

“Jerry”

If Charles was one of those people who likes to plunge right in, Jerry was someone who preferred to dip his toes in the water first before going for a really long swim. In the end, they each had an “aha” moment in my chair—that very special moment when the mind lights up with understanding and the heart releases its burdens. One took his time; the other hit the accelerator pedal. They both reached their destination, and that’s all that matters. For his part, Jerry came to me for the most spiritual reason you can imagine: he didn’t come because of a phobia, like Charles, and he didn’t have any health issues to resolve, like many others. Instead, he was having a crisis of faith, and he wanted to find out if hypnotherapy could resolve it. Everyone on the planet experiences a crisis of faith in one way or another at least once a lifetime, whether it’s a matter of losing faith in themselves, in their religious beliefs, in a political system or in those they love. But Jerry was a bit of a special case in this regard, as the question of faith had consumed him his entire life. Jerry, you see, was a theologian. He had not only studied religion, but had also taught it, at the university level, for decades—it was a career he had started after initially studying to be a priest. Unfortunately for him, now that he had reached middle age, he had become so disillusioned, discouraged and disenchanted that he both questioned the existence of God and questioned himself for even deciding upon a career in theology in the first place. An accomplished scholar, he had immense knowledge of religion, all derived from the countless books he had read and the long list of university courses he had taken. But he had reached the point where all those books just seemed *empty*. He even had a name for his “condition”: he called it “empty book syndrome.”

He wanted to be able to teach from a deeper perspective and a more

profound kind of wisdom; he wanted to truly connect with whatever it was that caused people to be religious in the first place, whether that was God, a higher plane, a mystical experience, or just his own soul. In short, he felt disconnected from himself, his students and his spirit, and he wanted that to change. And that was his state of mind when, one day as he was out walking, looking for a sign, he saw one—literally. The sign in question was mine, one that I had placed outside my building in downtown Victoria, Canada. He told me that when he saw it, something inside him made him stop and stare at it for a long time. Shortly thereafter, he booked his first session in my chair.

He made little progress at first. As I said earlier, intellectuals can be their own worst enemies. They know their own particular areas of expertise inside and out, but they often have little more than a passing acquaintance with the most important subject of them all—themselves. They frequently have the toughest time getting past their own mental defenses. Their whole way of being is focused on reading, writing, measuring and analysis, and that type of cerebral work can sometimes make it challenging to connect with their own subconscious minds. Unfortunately, without such a connection, they become strangers to themselves. The day eventually comes when they wake up in the morning, look in the mirror and see someone they don't even recognize. It was something like this that had happened to Jerry. It took several sessions in my chair for him to even begin to feel comfortable—with hypnosis, with the idea of connecting to himself on a deep level, even with the chair itself. I mean, for the first couple of sessions, he sat in a comfy chair and did nothing but squirm. The underlying reason for his discomfort was the very same one that had caused his crisis in the first place. Our civilization has a thousand ways of expressing his problem, which shows just how common it is. *He just can't get out of his own head. He's in his own way*. *He's displaying self-defeating behavior.* What it comes down to, in the end, is that some people just have a devil of a time bypassing their analytical side. After all, how *can* you if that's the only side you've allowed yourself to have? *Thinking, thinking, thinking*. People in our civilization literally think themselves to death.

Fortunately, however, one day the breakthrough he was looking for happened. He managed to set aside all that internal dialogue and entered the trance state. I've seen the shift happen so many times, I can practically feel it in my bones when it occurs. One moment the person is restless, and in the next—*voila*—they're in the zone. When I saw this happen to him, I waited for a few moments until a little birdie told me it was time to interrupt. And just I was about to the open my mouth, a smile appeared on his lips.

"Can you describe what you're experiencing?" I asked, speaking as quietly as possible while keeping my voice just loud enough for him to hear.

"I'm in what looks like a monastery," Jerry replied, keeping his eyes closed as he observed the scene that was playing out in his mind. "It's all so real and full of peace. There are these beautiful gardens, filled with flowers and beautiful plants of every description…" His voice, which contained a distinct note of awe, trailed off into silence.

I let him enjoy the moment, then asked: "What are you feeling right now?"

"Just peace. Incredible peace. This place, it's amazing. I can actually feel a slight breeze in the air."

The breeze in question wasn't coming from my office, as the window was closed and my floor fan was off. I said:

"Is there anyone else with you?"

"There are monks—many of them. They're dressed in dark robes. They're absolutely quiet, as quiet as this place. I think that's purposeful. I don't think they speak much. They've taken vows of silence, I think."

He was silent for a time. I waited for a few minutes and asked him to describe what he was experiencing.

"I'm wandering around inside a big stone building." He smiled. "I can actually feel the stone floor beneath my feet—the stones are cool, which is nice, as it's summertime."

Because this was Jerry's first time in a deep trance state, I stopped interrupting him in order to let him fully absorb his new surroundings. I knew that if he needed to return to this fascinating place in future, he would

go there again. For now, I just wanted him to relax and soak it all in. After about fifteen minutes, I sensed he was coming to the surface. Moments later, his eyes opened and he looked at me with the biggest smile. I smiled back. That was all that needed to happen during that particular session, so after talking about it for a little while, we agreed that he should try picking up where he had left off the next time he came in.

Over the next month or so, Jerry returned to the same monastery many times, and each time emerged from the experience having learned something new about his "special place." He was sure it was located somewhere in Europe, possibly northern Italy. As for the time period, he guessed it was sometime in the Middle Ages. Every time he went there he was a little boy: he was able to describe himself in considerable detail, and he knew that the boy in question had his own small room, with a single bed on one end, near the window. On one occasion, as he had stood in the room, he had heard birds chirping through the window; on another, he had heard the deep rumblings of a thunderstorm. Also in the room was a small desk and chair: he spent a lot of time sitting on it reading and writing as the birds sang merrily outside his window. To him, it was clearly a type of paradise. The boy's needs were provided for; he was being educated by the monks; he had only a few minor responsibilities, and ample opportunity to walk the grounds, climb trees and do other things a boy of that day and age would like to do. He was so enamored of the place that he said multiple times that he thought it was like "Heaven on Earth."

Jerry came to realize quite a lot about himself by being in that place. First and foremost, he had no doubt that he was experiencing a prior lifetime: from his perspective, everything he was seeing and feeling in my chair, all the information that was flooding into his mind, was proof positive that what he had come face to face with had at one point been absolutely real. He soon came to view the monastery as the place where his love of learning had really begun to flower. He also came to believe that it was his deep attachment to that sacred space that had made him choose not to marry or procreate in his current lifetime. As he told me:

"There are enough people on the planet already. I don't want to add more.

I deeply believe that my primary purpose is something else."

And what was that something else?

It was, he said, to develop his relationship with the God of his understanding, and to help others find their spiritual path.

As soon as he realized this, however, his journeys to the monastery took a sudden twist. It was almost as if someone who had been listening to our discussion had decided it was time to reveal more. In our next session, when he arrived at the monastery, things began to change. He was no longer a child, but had grown into a young man. He spent his time walking in the hills that surrounded the monastery, working in the gardens, and listening to the monks pass on their knowledge. Sitting in my chair, he told me he was waiting for something to happen. I knew in an instant that he what he was about to tell me was very significant.

"What?" I prompted.

"I think it's direct experience of the divine," he replied. "The monks tell me it will happen, but I must be patient. In fact, one of them was telling me that again and again. I can hear him say it, even now. *You're not listening. You're not hearing. You're not being patient.* And he's right. He's absolutely right. I'm not. I've read everything I can put my hands on, but it's not enough. I want to *feel* it, to know without doubt that it's real."

We had reached the point where his past life was beginning to sound an awful lot like his current life. When that happens, I know we're getting somewhere—somewhere good. When that critical moment arrives, I always take pains to get the people sitting in my chair to explore the feelings and sensations that are coming to them. The reason is simple. I'm a firm believer that the subconscious always wants to take you to the place where your current trouble, whatever it is, began: to the root of the problem, so to speak. Once there, thanks to the "magic" of hypnosis, you're able to view it dispassionately and release whatever emotional baggage you've been carrying around with you since you first encountered it. I could sense that this was Jerry's opportunity to do just that. He even said as much. He had come to me because of a crisis of faith, and now, having traveled back to a previous life, he was describing *another* crisis of faith. In my experience,

having watched something similar happen to hundreds of people, this type of thing carries over from lifetime to lifetime. Such unresolved emotional issues can haunt you for a very long time indeed—over many lifetimes, in fact. But thankfully, they can also be exorcised.

My intuition told me Jerry needed to focus on this latest twist and ask himself to experience whatever he needed to experience to really get to the source of the problem. Once I had gently explained this to him, he was silent for a while. Then he became somewhat agitated. Sensing another shift, I said:

"Can you tell me what's happening?"

He frowned. "The monastery is under attack." Tears began running down his cheeks. "There's an army coming. They're killing the monks! They're killing them, and I can't do anything about it."

"Can you tell me why?"

"I'm not there. I'm on the far side of the property. I can't get back in time, and I wouldn't be able to do anything to stop them anyway."

After a few minutes, I managed to calm him down. Deciding he'd had enough for one day, I brought him out of trance, then asked him to tell me about his experience once he was ready. The emotions left him as quickly as they had arrived; that too is the magic of hypnosis. He told me every last one of the monastery's monks had been killed: but because he had kept out of sight on the edge of an orchard, he had survived the attack. He said that the younger version of himself had felt absolutely devastated following the assault. He had known no other way of living, he had no other family, and he had no other community. All of it had been lost in a single day. All he had left were a few scrolls, which he had tucked away in his cloth sack, and the clothing on his back. Sitting up in a tree hearing the soldiers patrol the grounds, he felt utterly paralyzed with the fear of being captured. And then he *was* captured.

Captured, tortured and raped.

Yet despite everything he witnessed, at the end of his session that day he gave me a fiercely determined look and told me he needed to go back. Notwithstanding his horrifying ordeal following his capture, he was sure

there remained an important gem of information waiting for him at that monastery. He didn't know what it was, but he was utterly convinced that there was something of profound significance there, and his happiness depended on him going back and finding out what it was.

The matter was decided, then. We agreed to make the monastery our primary focus during our next session. The intervening time would allow him to recharge his batteries and process what he had already learned.

When he walked through my door the next time, I was pleased to see how calm he was. It's always gratifying to see positive change in the people you work with, and I knew he was a changed man. Once he had settled in the chair, I took him through an induction in which he visualized walking down the stairs of a medieval stone building. It didn't take him long to get back to the place where he had left off in the previous session. This time, however, he maintained his tranquility throughout. Even when he reached the point where his life was ending at the hands of his torturers, he managed to maintain his distance from the scene.

And that was when he had his *aha* moment.

As he observed his own death, he heard something.

Nine short words.

They were quiet words—mere whispers, really—but they held within them the power to change his perspective forever. He should have heard them before, at the moment of his death so many years earlier, but, disobeying the monks' advice, *he hadn't been listening*. He was now, and what he heard moved him deeply. The words floated into his ears, borne by a breeze from the garden outside the room where he was watching himself being beaten to death.

It was a message.

Nine short words that were as sweet as honey.

Be not afraid…

For I am with you always.

Sitting in my chair that day, Jerry looked over at me. His eyes were full of tears, but there was joy in them too. He let out a huge sigh, and then said one word:

"Yes!"

And that said it all.

It was his final session. A few weeks later we met at a local teashop for a cup of tea and a friendly chat about our work together.

He was a different man.

I could tell from his facial expressions, his laughter, and his words. I could especially see it in his eyes, which had a brightness that hadn't been there when I had first met him. Putting down his teacup, he told me something I have never forgotten. He said the words he had heard that day had been instrumental in changing his life. As far as he was concerned, he had finally made contact with the divine—with that higher level of consciousness that he had been seeking for so long, and through multiple lifetimes.

Then he added something that made me realize that he'd really gotten the point of his entire experience: he said his breakthrough never would have happened without the horror and pain that had followed the destruction of the monastery, the murder of the monks, and his own torture and death. Prior to the attack, that monastery was Heaven on Earth to him, *but Heaven on its own would have never changed him*. It didn't have the power to do so. That type of change doesn't come out of peace and abundance. It comes out of their opposites—from war, from strife, from the inherent challenge of being an imperfect being living with other imperfect beings in an imperfect place. It comes from being shaken to the core of one's being, shoved out of one's sense of complacency, ejected from the ego self, catapulted out of our sense of normalcy.

He had to become ash, he said.

He had to burn himself to the ground in order to rise up again.

After that wonderful teatime conversation, we lost touch. Then, a decade later, he called me out of the blue and told me something, something that brought a huge smile to my face. He had decided to go back to school—to become a hypnotherapist.

CASE THREE

"Betty"

We sometimes talk about people "finding their voice," an expression that means, in essence, that they have learned how to express themselves as individuals. It's more than that, actually. It's that they have realized, at a core level, they have a right to be heard. Some of you may not understand just how difficult this is for some of us. While speaking one's mind is incredibly easy for some, for others it is like having one's teeth yanked out without anesthetic. These shy souls don't just have difficulty speaking in public; they have difficulty speaking in private, even to their loved ones. For them, finding their voice and expressing their emotions is as monumental a feat as someone climbing Mount Everest. Sometimes the reason for this extreme reticence can be found in early childhood trauma, and that's where mainstream psychology will tend to look first. But in my experience, the cause can be traced back much further than that, to previous lifetimes in which they were so traumatized that they completely closed up psychologically, like a turtle withdrawing into its shell. The resulting self-protectiveness and fear were then carried over to their current lifetime, as a type of "echo" still more than capable of haunting them in the present.

As we saw earlier, Dr. Ian Stevenson's research uncovered a compelling correlation between past-life memories and current-life afflictions or even physical markings: in many cases, birthmarks were found to match wounds that the people in question identified as having been sustained in a previous life.[94] Stevenson discovered that in some instances this could actually be verified by looking at medical records. As Jerry Bering notes in his *Scientific American* article on Stevenson's research:

> Stevenson's magnum opus, published in 1997, was a 2,268-page,

> two-volume work called *Reincarnation and Biology*. Many of his subjects had unusual birthmarks and birth defects, such as finger deformities, underdeveloped ears, or being born without a lower leg. There were scar-like, hypopigmented birthmarks and port-wine stains, and some awfully strange-looking moles in areas where you almost never find moles, like on the soles of the feet. *Reincarnation and Biology* contained 225 case reports of children who remembered previous lives and who also had physical anomalies that matched those previous lives, details that could in some cases be confirmed by the dead person's autopsy record and photos.[95]

This sort of spiritual echo is the result of an injury so awful that it is capable of reverberating through time, leaving a mark on the soul that manifests in a later lifetime. Included among Stevenson's cases were a number of extraordinary examples that strongly support the argument for reincarnation. Bering, whose first reaction to Stevenson's research was, of course, that it was nothing but pure nonsense, changed his mind after reviewing the evidence. As Bering noted, some of Stevenson's strongest examples included remarkable "coincidences" such as the following:

> A Turkish boy whose face was congenitally underdeveloped on the right side said he remembered the life of a man who died from a shotgun blast at point-blank range. A Burmese girl born without her lower right leg had talked about the life of a girl run over by a train. On the back of the head of a little boy in Thailand was a small, round puckered birthmark, and at the front was a larger, irregular birthmark, resembling the entry and exit wounds of a bullet; Stevenson had already confirmed the details of the boy's statements about the life of a man who'd been shot in the head from behind with a rifle, so that seemed to fit. And a child in India who said he remembered the life of a boy who'd lost the fingers of his right hand in a fodder-chopping machine mishap was born with

> boneless stubs for fingers on his right hand only. This type of "unilateral brachydactyly" is so rare, Stevenson pointed out, that he couldn't find a single medical publication of another case.[96]

Just as physical wounds seem capable of echoing across lifetimes, so can psychological conditions like depression, phobia, anxiety or (as in a case we will examine shortly) the inability to speak one's mind. As far as past-life regression is concerned, in many instances such problems can be cleared up once the person suffering the affliction has gone back, or regressed, to the incident that caused it—once he or she has, in other words, looked that experience directly in the eye. Once that is accomplished, the echo fades, and with it, the problem.

While such a claim may arouse skepticism in some, I have personally witnessed this occur many times. Even physical maladies can disappear following regression: one client, a young man who suffered from chronic pain in his left leg, discovered during regression that he had been a British soldier in the American Revolution; the soldier had died after being shot in his left leg. Following regression, the pain disappeared and did not recur. Other examples come to mind, as well:

1. One client had experienced constant migraines since childhood. Despite multiple tests by numerous physicians, no rational explanation could be provided: according to doctors, he was perfectly healthy. Pharmaceutical drugs only dulled the pain; they weren't enough to allow him to lead a normal life. During regression, he experienced going back to a previous lifetime in which he had been a soldier in World War II. He watched as his best friend was shot in the face, killing the man instantly, then he himself was fatally shot in the head. He died looking at the horribly mutilated face of his dead friend. Following regression, his migraines disappeared entirely.

2. A client came to me complaining of constant back pain. She'd had it most of her life, and chiropractors were of little help. During regression she experienced a prior lifetime in which she'd been a slave in the southern U.S. She'd been repeatedly flogged with a thick leather strap, as well as raped. Following regression, her back pain disappeared.
3. Another client came to me who had been born with a hole in her heart. Although doctors had recommended surgery, her parents had refused, so throughout her childhood she was like a weak duckling, almost always very short of breath and extremely tired. During regression, she experienced a past lifetime in which she lived in Africa as a male warrior who fell in love with a woman from an enemy tribe. One day while he was out walking in the jungle, his lover's brother threw a spear that pierced his heart. He died with his lover's name on his lips. After regression, my client went in for X-rays and was shocked to learn that the hole in her heart was gone. Much to her doctors' surprise, she no longer experienced heart problems or shortness of breath.
4. One of my clients was completely unable to open his right hand. It was a terrible malady to have, on both a psychological and physical level, and he'd been ashamed of it since he was an adolescent, which was when it first appeared, seemingly without reason. During regression, he recalled a past life as a dockworker in London, England. One day he was caught stealing a case of whiskey from a ship. A mob of men beat him severely, cutting off three of his fingers in the process. He ended up dying of a hand infection after suffering excruciating pain. After regression, he could open up his hand fully, without any pain, for the

first time in decades. Building on that positive result, he then worked with a physiologist and successfully learned how to strengthen his hand so it could function normally.

5. Another client came to me with a truly debilitating problem: she was nearly blind in her left eye. During regression, she remembered a lifetime in which she was a member of an upper-class family in England. She and a childhood friend had an intense rivalry that escalated into violence over a young man who had captured their attention. One day at lunch, she tried to blackmail the other woman by threatening to reveal embarrassing information if she did not stop courting the man; her friend responded by stabbing my client in the eye with a fork. As a consequence, she was blind for the rest of her life and never married. Following regression, my client's vision went from legal blindness in her left eye to 20-20 with the aid of glasses. She also gained enough confidence to get her driver's license for the first time.
6. One man came to me complaining of infertility. During regression, he discovered a previous life in which he had been a member of an outlaw gang that had violently raped two women on a train. He was caught at the next train stop by locals, taken out into a nearby field for some rough justice, and castrated. He died a lonely and broken man who had a fierce hatred of women. After regression, he and his wife discontinued their IVF treatments and conceived naturally. They are now the proud parents of two girls.

Again and again, I have seen illnesses and behavioral problems disappear completely or fade into insignificance as a direct consequence of re-experiencing past-life trauma under controlled conditions. Are people simply making up such experiences and then using the power of their minds to affect a cure? If so—and I don't believe that to be the case—maybe more

people should indulge in such fantasies, as the end result is a profound reduction of suffering, and that's something we can all embrace.

Before we proceed to our next case study, I'd like to prepare the ground just a little bit more by mentioning two of my favorite reincarnation cases from the annals of history. The first was researched by Professor Hemendra Bannerjee, a psychologist at Rajasthan University in India. It involves an Indian girl by the name of Shanti Devi, who claimed to have lived a previous life in the town of Muttra. Devi, who was born in Delhi in October 1926, began to describe this prior life in 1930, at age four. Among other details she provided, she included her previous address in Muttra. As Colin Wilson recounts:

> Her husband, she said, had been a cloth merchant named Kedar Nath Chaubey. A school principal who tried writing to the address she gave in Muttra was startled to receive a reply from Kedar Nath. A cousin of Kedar Nath's who hurried to Delhi was immediately recognized by Shanti Devi. And when the nine-year-old girl was finally taken to Muttra, she recognized relatives and was able to direct the carriage around the town. In Kedar Nath's house she led them to a spot where she said she had buried money in a tin; the tin proved to be empty, but Kedar Nath admitted he had taken the money.[97]

The second case was researched by Dr. Stevenson. It involved the son of a man called Mohammed Elawar, a Druse who lived in Kornayel, a village to the east of Beirut, Lebanon. His son Imad began to recount details of a previous life at a very early age. Born in 1958, the first word he uttered when he learned how to speak was "Jamileh," a woman's name. Then Imad began talking about a past life in which his name was Bouhamzy and he lived in Khriby, a town twenty miles away. The boy provided details about the house and his relatives, but his father was either too lazy or too skeptical to check to see if they corresponded to the truth. When Stevenson heard of the case, however, he did just that. As Wilson relates:

> He first interviewed Imad and collected details of his life as Bouhamzy, then went to Khriby and talked to Bouhamzy's family. Introduced to Bouhamzy's family, the six-year-old boy not only showed intimate knowledge of his "relatives," but astonished them by behaving and sounding like Bouhamzy. Fifty-one out of fifty-seven statements made by Imad about Bouhamzy turned out to be correct…. "Jamileh" proved to have been Bouhamzy's mistress. As Stevenson pointed out, the possibility of fraud was remote: it would have involved the deliberate collusion of seventeen people who had no reason to lie.[98]

As we saw in the first section of this book, there are many more cases like those of Imad and Devi in which researchers verified the details provided by the individuals who claimed to have previous lives. From my perspective, they provide more than enough evidence for a reasonable person to believe that reincarnation is far more than just the imagination run amok. More importantly, they raise important questions about the connection between current and past lives: just how does one impact the other? And even more critically, when one impacts the other in a negative way, how can such effects be reduced or eliminated? This is precisely where regression comes in. In our next case, we will meet someone who lost her voice in a previous lifetime, but thanks to regression hypnosis, found it again—both literally and figuratively.

Betty attended one of my earliest workshops. During these affairs, I assemble a small group of people who are interested in finding out more about what I do. By hypnotizing the entire group, as well as individual volunteers who have done regression hypnosis before, participants learn firsthand about hypnosis in general and spiritual regression in particular. Betty was a trained librarian and an extremely well-read woman. She was an employee in one of Victoria's most iconic bookstores, the sort of place where a bookworm would instantly feel at home. Having access to a wealth of information, she had read all about hypnotherapy and hypnosis before

attending my workshop, but she had never experienced it for herself. That was all going to change—and so was she—in a big way.

When I met her, she was terribly unhappy and extremely shy. A European by birth, she had married—with great reluctance—and moved to Canada. In the process of changing continents, she had left behind an ailing mother and a deaf sister in Europe, but in spite of her discontent at the idea of abandoning them, her new husband wouldn't budge an inch: he was insistent that they were going to leave the Old Country behind, and that was that. End of discussion. Greatly saddened, she nevertheless felt powerless to do anything about it, so she went along with it. As a result, once she arrived in Canada, she retreated psychologically, burying herself in books and sinking into despair.

My hypnotherapy workshop piqued her interest and gave her enough courage to take the next step. She was ripe for an inner journey, and hypnosis seemed to her like the best way to take one. Shortly after the workshop, she booked an appointment with me for some one-on-one work, but although on one level she was certain that hypnosis would be good for her, she was so painfully shy that it took time for her to lower her barriers enough to proceed. This was accomplished with the help of one of my most powerful weapons: a pot of freshly brewed tea combined with cookies and conversation. Soon she had warmed to the idea of taking the next step, and what a step it was.

Over the course of several sessions, she found herself back in the Old World again—but it was a much *older* version of the Old World, one in which she was a nun. And not only was she a nun, but she was a very special kind of nun: a *singing* nun. This caught her by surprise, as in her current lifetime she barely allowed herself to speak, let alone sing in public. But in the lifetime that regression brought to the surface, she sang all the time: alone, with others, even in a choir.

One of her most important duties in that lifetime was to care for the elderly in a convent hospital. It was an older version of what we would now call hospice work: her job was to make them feel comfortable in their final days. This particular aspect of her previous life really rang true to her,

because in her current lifetime, even though she was hopelessly shy, the place she felt most at ease was in the company of senior citizens.

Further sessions filled out the picture for her. She came to understand why her relationships with men were always so unsatisfactory—why she was always so passive, unfulfilled, and easily pushed off her path by a partner's wishes. In one regression session, she discovered another lifetime in which she had been sold off as a child by poverty-stricken parents who had too many mouths to feed. The man who had bought her promptly imprisoned her inside a metal cage on the back of a horse-drawn wagon and left town. She never saw her family again.

Sitting in my chair with tears streaming down her cheeks, she told me of the deep sadness and immense bitterness she could feel flowing through that young prisoner's heart as she contemplated her dismal future. It would turn out to be a lifetime of slavery in which she would never spend time with her younger siblings. Being first-born, she deeply felt the responsibility many older children feel regarding younger family members. Who would protect them now that she was gone? And who would protect her? As it turned out, the answer was simple.

No one.

Her visit to that particular lifetime had no happy ending: her new owner sold her into prostitution. The other prostitutes tormented her for no other reason than the fact that she was a younger version of themselves, and within a decade, she had died of a sexually transmitted disease. Between sobs, she told me it had been a lonely death, one that had taken place in a one-room shack in a bad part of town. Her final thoughts in that lifetime were of the siblings she had left behind when she was sold: and even though at some level she realized it wasn't her fault, she nonetheless vowed to punish herself for an eternity for leaving them defenseless. Now, if anything is capable of echoing across eternity, a vow like that would qualify. That punishment came in the form of her current situation, one in which she seemed incapable of defending herself. It was, in other words, *her* turn. Although in her past lifetime as a nun she had definitely possessed a voice of her own, in her current lifetime she had none, the result, I

believe, of both the vow and her previous enslavement. Men had sold her, bought her, taken everything and left her to die. That is the essence of powerlessness, and it's also something that can echo across lifetimes, even without the presence of a vow to reinforce it. But as I have learned over the years, on a soul level it is often the case that *we only learn how to live by learning how not to live*. There are no shortcuts when it comes to life lessons. That previous lifetime as a slave left an indelible mark on her, like a glacier cutting through rock. We carry such marks forever, from lifetime to lifetime, from birth to death to birth. What we always need to remember, however, is that the soul's rock still remains, and that if we look our past in the eye, we can *choose* to emerge into the light once again, even stronger than before. We can *choose* to live again; we can *choose* to renounce old vows; we can *choose* to live in the now.

And that's what Betty did.

You might think that seeing a lifetime of torment would merely serve to drag her down further, but that's not how it works. Hypnotic regression allows us to put the past under the microscope of objectivity and see it for what it is: and once we have done that, we can move beyond it. Hypnosis allows us to view the past as a conqueror, *not* as a victim. Those two perspectives are like night and day. Betty was a changed woman after her experiences in my chair. She changed from being a shy woman who had been pushed around all her life to a woman who could stand on her own—and stand up for herself. She found her voice; she even joined a choir. And by joining the choir, she discovered that she actually had a beautiful singing voice. The thing is, I had already told her that. Before I had even heard her sing, I had received one of my "downloads." This took place before she walked in the door. When she arrived, I sat her down, handed her a cup of tea, and said:

"I'm told you have the voice of an angel, and that you were born to sing people across that line into the next world."

She didn't believe me at the time, but by the end of our work together, she was singing her heart out. She even began selling her own CDs—at first to friends, and then to the general public. CDs of her music are now used by

hospice groups to comfort the dying—a development that took her full circle, back to that lifetime in which she had helped the elderly in a convent hospital.

One last thing about Betty. She divorced her husband and returned to Europe, which she had never wanted to leave in the first place. Rejoining her mother and sister, she fulfilled a deep, but unspoken, desire to help them navigate the challenges of life. She also started her own business as a caring companion to the elderly. So you see, what goes around truly does come around. It's just that for some people, it takes a long time for life's merry-go-round to make a complete circuit. Still, she had finally found her voice and her courage. She was, I suppose, a slow-moving soul, but she arrived at the right place in the end. In such matters, speed is of no consequence, for the soul's journey is beyond time. She had found her voice.

That's all that mattered.

CASE FOUR

“Larry”

Larry’s case is memorable for several reasons, not least of which is how he came to me in the first place. He had been secretly wishing for guidance to help him solve a lifelong problem he just couldn’t shake—addiction. I think we all wish for a guide or helper to appear at one time or another during the course of our lives, particularly when things seem to be at their bleakest, and for Larry, things were very bleak. Well, it just so happens that shortly after he made this wish, he stumbled upon a book about the therapeutic benefits of hypnotic regression. Intrigued, he did a web search and found my website.

He was about to contact me for an appointment when something stopped him: like a lot of people, he was afraid to take the next step. The process of finding answers to life’s big questions is often a difficult one that requires careful navigation, a readiness to hit the restart button, and sometimes even a little assistance from the Universe. In Larry’s case, apparently the Universe wasn’t as quick to give up on him as he was on it. At the time, I was in the market for furniture, and I “just happened” to walk into the very store where Larry was a furniture salesman. During our conversation about tables and chairs, he “just happened” to ask what I did for a living. When I told him, he looked at me in surprise and asked my name. Finding out it was the name of the very hypnotherapist he had wanted to contact, his face lit up in a smile. His attempt to book an appointment had stalled only days before, and here I was, strolling into his place of work. It was the very definition of synchronicity, and it took that great big iceberg of fear that had prevented him from contacting me and melted it into something a lot more manageable—an ice cube, you might say.

A couple of weeks later, he came in for his first session in my chair.

While first sessions are usually just exercises in familiarization in which clients tell me about what they hope to achieve, after which point they are usually introduced to hypnosis for the first time, in Larry's case, things were different. He didn't need familiarization: he took to hypnosis like a Chinook salmon to water. Sitting in my chair, he quickly entered a trance state and floated back in time to a very powerful event from his boyhood—an event so traumatizing that his conscious mind had all but forgotten it. The subconscious, however, never forgets, and that's what makes hypnosis such an effective way of looking at the events that help mold us into the people we become.

In Larry's case, his subconscious transported him back to a time when he was only eight years old and sitting in a car. He was with his mother, father and six-year-old sister. They had just attended a family reunion and were now driving home. His father was behind the wheel, his mother was in the front passenger seat, and his sister was sitting in the backseat next to him. The two kids were having a blast playing with their toys. As Larry, sitting in my chair, continued to look at the scene unfolding in front of his mind's eye, he described it to me in a detailed fashion, though in fits and starts. What he was being shown was coming to him in a way that resembled short video clips, accompanied by bursts of information as the events of that day began flooding into his conscious mind. He remembered being a happy child, with a caring, hard-working father and a loving, stay-at-home mom. His little sister, Sophie, was his best friend; they played together endlessly. He even remembered the fact that in his pocket was a piece of homemade fudge that his Aunt Maggie had made for him; he'd been nibbling on it during the car ride, but stopped after his mother shot him a stern look courtesy of the rearview mirror. As for his mother, she had one of those beehive hairdos that were popular back in the early 1960s; remembering it as he sat in my office brought a huge smile to his lips.

After recounting all this, Larry opened his eyes. I knew he wasn't finished telling me about his regression experience, but I waited for a few moments before saying anything. The subconscious mind will sometimes abruptly interrupt the retrieval of a memory if it comes too close to a past

trauma, and I had a gut feeling that's what had happened. It was like Larry had been happily swimming in the ocean when suddenly a big wave appeared out of nowhere and catapulted him onto shore. He needed time to do some processing. After a minute or two, I asked:

"Can you tell me anything more about that day?"

When Larry looked at me, tears were in his eyes. "That was the day my parents died," he replied quietly.

He explained. That perfectly idyllic day, one full of laughter and joy, had ended in tragedy—in a horrible car accident in which his parents had been killed, turning him and his sister into orphans. *That* is what his subconscious mind hadn't allowed him to see during regression. And that is also why, up until this point in time, he had never had any conscious recollection of the actual event, in all its terror. At most, it was a vague abstraction to him; it was simply too awful to remember with any clarity. Think of a monster so horrifying that you are unable to look at it directly, and that's what Larry had lived with his whole life. But while the event had no *conscious* hold on him, it had placed his subconscious mind in a very tight vise. Everything had changed for him in that moment—in addition to losing both parents, he had severely injured his back, leaving him in so much chronic pain that he had spent his life on heavy-duty painkillers, with all that involved. We both thought it quite likely that everything he was experiencing—the addiction problems, the pain, the lack of personal fulfillment, the failed relationships—had its roots in that *one* accident. Yet despite its incredible personal importance, he had never even mentioned it to me during our initial conversation. It functioned like a shark swimming in the deepest depths of his subconscious, shadowing him wherever he went and whatever he did, but never coming up to the surface so that it could be seen and, more importantly, *faced*. And that's what he needed to do. He needed to go back to that day and look that shark in the eye—and to release whatever emotions had been bottled up inside of him since that life-changing day. He immediately agreed.

The real work could now begin.

For the next few sessions, it was "two steps forward, one step back." He

would enter trance, return to the event, talk about it in general terms, and then get bounced out again, just as he had the first time. But we could both tell that he was getting more and more comfortable with the process—and with the memory of that day—so we persisted. Then, one day, it finally happened, and he was able to see the event in its entirety.

This is how it played out.

He was back in the car. He could actually hear the radio playing up front. His mother was smoking a cigarette; he could even smell it. Whenever his mom wasn't talking to his dad, she was singing along with the radio. He looked down and saw his favorite teddy bear in his hands, then looked across the backseat to his sister and saw her smile.

Then came the horn. Someone was blasting it again and again and again, and wouldn't stop. He attempted to sit up straight to look out the side window. Everything was blurry—except for the headlights of a truck coming right at them. At that moment, he felt completely paralyzed with fear. There was the sound of a thunderclap as the truck slammed into their car, T-boning it. The collision sent their vehicle flying off the road and into a tree. After that, all he could see were freeze-frame images that came to him one after another: in one of them, he saw his parents. They looked like they were sleeping. He tried to wake them up, but he couldn't. He saw his sister, and a wave of relief flooded over him. She had blood on her face, but she was still alive, just curled up on the floor of the backseat, whimpering. Then he heard shouts as people came running toward the crash. And then…

…Then he saw a flash of light out of the corner of his eye.

Just one single flash.

Before he was able to clearly see what was causing it, he was bounced out of the trance state again. When he opened his eyes, they seemed filled with three things at the same time: relief, amazement, and confusion. When the words came, they confirmed my impression. He was relieved, firstly, that he had finally gone deeply into the memory; amazed at what he had seen; and confused because he strongly felt that he had been prevented from witnessing something that he intuitively sensed was very important. Although he couldn't quite put his finger on it, he felt that it had something

to do that flash of light.

We agreed to try again. The incident was just too important for us to move on without a strong sense of closure. My own intuition was telling me that there *was* something there for him to discover—something on a spiritual level—but it was up to him to see it for himself. As it turned out, my intuition was correct. During our next session, he didn't leave quite so empty-handed. He saw his family in the car, driving down the road; he smelled his mom's cigarette; he saw his teddy bear; he heard the blasting of the horn and the terrible screech of metal on metal as the two vehicles collided. Everything he had seen before, he saw again, only this time just a little bit clearer, as if he had put on a pair of glasses and could now see things properly.

And then he saw the flash again.

But this time, he knew *exactly* what it was.

The words came out of his mouth in a stream as he described what he was seeing. "I'm looking at my dad," he said. "The flash came from his body when he died. Only it's not really a flash. It's like a mist—an almost transparent mist—that's rising up off him. It's floating upward through the roof of the car." He gasped audibly as he realized what he was seeing. As he was saying this, I felt the temperature of the room plummet—and I knew, from long experience, what *that* meant. Nevertheless, I said nothing. Instead, Larry said it for me. With eyes still closed, he whispered:

"He's here. *He's right here in this room*."

I still said nothing, preferring to let him process what he was experiencing on his own terms. He kept his eyes closed, but moved his head from side to side, as if looking at something—or rather *someone*—from different angles. "I can see him plain as day. He's standing right in front of your bookcases. It's so vivid it's like being at an IMAX theatre."

I finally broke my silence. "Does he have a message for you?"

Larry's voice broke as he replied: "Yes."

"Would you like to share it?"

His reply was deeply touching. "He says he loves me. He says he and mom are fine. He says they're watching over me and my sister." He paused,

as if his mind was too busy processing what he was seeing and feeling to talk. Then, after a short interval, he added: "He's telling me I need to feel the pain from that day—to feel it and release it." There was another pause, followed by: "He says the doctors told me to expect pain for the rest of my life, and like a good little boy, I've just been following their instructions." Pause. "He also says I'm the one who's been making all that pain happen. I need to believe it can be otherwise, and it will be."

Larry opened his eyes. After a brief discussion of what had happened—and, more importantly, what he *felt* about what had happened—we agreed to continue next time. And so we did. It would take several more sessions, but things progressed rapidly after that point. From then on, instead of focusing on the memory of the crash, we focused on an equally important task: using hypnosis to retrain his mind in such a way that he would be able to connect with his own inner sense of calm, so that he would no longer have to rely so heavily on pharmaceuticals to manage his pain. This ended up working so well that over the next few months, he was able to review his use of painkillers with a physician—and that led to a significant reduction in his use of drugs.

Regression and hypnosis also helped him in other important ways: he became emotionally ready to reconnect with his sister, with whom he had lost touch, and to return to school to learn a new trade. The result was an amazing transformation. After only a few years, he went from being a furniture salesman to being a *maker* of furniture, having fulfilled a lifelong dream of becoming a carpenter. The powerful memories he had re-experienced in my chair, along with his moving encounter with his father, helped him change his life in profound ways—ways that would make any parent, living or dead, tremendously proud.

Oh, one last thing about Larry. After that day in my office when he "saw" his deceased father, he told me several times that he was absolutely convinced that it *was* indeed his father who had come to advise him; to him, that experience was 100% real. His imagination had nothing to do with it: on that particular point, he was very insistent.

And who was I to argue? I had felt the temperature in the room change

abruptly, and I had sensed a strong, almost electric presence all around us—both things that I had experienced many times in the past in connection with psychic events. But I know that anyone who hasn't experienced such phenomena directly find them very difficult to fathom, so I am always careful to let the people who ride in my chair experience them without any prompting from me. That way, what's theirs is truly theirs. And I am taking the same approach in this book by not being overly insistent that we encountered Larry's father's spirit that day, even though I know what *I* believe.

And what I believe—and what Larry believes—is that we did.

CASE FIVE

“Greg”

Imagine, for a moment, what it would be like if you could activate a hidden skill you never even knew you had. What if you could reach across time, across the seemingly impenetrable barrier called death, and retrieve a talent from a previous lifetime? Or what if you could cross that same barrier and bring back even just a passion for something, then grow it into a full-blown career? All these things are more than just possible: I have seen them happen throughout my career. Hard as it may be to believe, some of my clients have done past-life work in which they discovered abilities they never knew they possessed, and then went on to reactivate them in their current lives. Here are examples:

1. One man had felt a keen interest in boating throughout his life, but for some strange reason always had anxiety about it too. During regression, he discovered he had lived a past life as a Viking, and died at sea following a stabbing. After our hypnotherapy work together, he not only took sailing lessons, but he sailed right through them at lightning speed —shocking both him and his instructors. He ended up changing careers and working full-time for a major ferry company. He later told me that his career shift made him feel fulfilled beyond his wildest dreams.
2. One woman came to me for pain relief. She suffered from terrible arthritis in her hands. Most of her fingers were misshapen, and her hands were gnarled out of shape. Medication, which had worked for a while, was lessening in effectiveness. Like many people who come to me, she

was at a loss over what to do: as she put it, she was "tied up in knots" over the situation, and her doctors could offer little help other than heavier pain killers, an option she didn't want to take. Regression revealed a lifetime as a young woman working in the garment industry in Europe—specifically, in an upscale shop specializing in men's suits. One day there was a terrible fire at the shop, and her hands were badly burned. She was unable to work again, and she spent the rest of her life living on the streets begging for money; she died a lonely death, broken from exhaustion, malnutrition and pain. After remembering that lifetime, however, the pain in her hands disappeared, and her fingers began straightening out without any treatment. To cap things off, she found herself spontaneously designing clothing without any training whatsoever. Her "new" ability as a clothing designer led to a job in New York, where she became a costume designer in the movie and TV industry.

3. Speaking of television, fans of British TV might recall an episode of "New Tricks" in which cast member Gerry Standing (played by UK actor Dennis Waterman) displays a profound fear of being in the forest. When I saw this, I was immediately reminded of a client who suffered from the same phobia—he was absolutely petrified of wooded areas. During regression, he discovered a previous lifetime in which he had been a medicine man for a North American Indian tribe in the Canadian wilderness. After frightening the European settlers with his "occult" abilities as a healer, he was shot and killed by a local lawman. After revisiting this lifetime in regression, his phobia disappeared, allowing him to reacquaint himself with Mother Nature without any of his previous anxiety. He found himself taking long walks deep into the forest, completely alone—something that had been unthinkable before hypnosis—and then returning with

a collection of plants that he had picked during his journey. Research then confirmed what intuition had already told him: that the plants were medicinal in nature, with each particular plant having a specific healing property that he had been able to somehow "sense" during his nature walks. He now owns a popular herbal medicine shop and is widely respected for his talents as a healer.

Hypnosis, therefore, can act as a gateway, allowing useful skills and proclivities from a previous lifetime to bubble up to the surface in the here and now. This doesn't always happen, of course, so don't run down to your local hypnotherapist thinking you'll instantly turn your past lifetime as a spy into a new career at the CIA. There's no guarantee you'll even be able to successfully do past-life regression in the first place—not everyone can—or that such exotic skills can be had without effort. What it comes down to, in my view, is whether there's a very good reason—a *healing* reason—for you to reacquire such ability. In the case of the medicine man, healing was the predominant theme throughout: he had once been a healer, and his life's work as a healer had been cut short because of his fatal encounter with racists and bigots. At some level, he must have dearly wanted to complete what he had started, and he was allowed to do so. In the case of the woman who became a costume designer, healing was again the reason—she had reached the point where she couldn't go on without solving her arthritis problem. The upshot is that the regression process in general and the talent reacquisition process in specific are mostly beyond our ability to control with any precision: in fact, regression, like the subconscious mind itself, is a mystery unto itself. Your conscious mind may *believe* that reacquiring a skill from a past lifetime is a fabulous idea, but your higher, wiser self might disagree. If the latter is the case, you are out of luck: no career as a super spy for you. We *influence* the outcome, but no one I have ever known has complete control—not on the conscious level, anyway. The subconscious is also not a supermarket where we can pick and choose

whatever skills or outcomes we like, then march up to the cashier and pay for them on the way out. It's also not a TV set that we can tune to whatever channel we want to watch. Such casual voyeurism is not something I'd recommend when it comes to dealing with the innermost reaches of the mind. You need to proceed with the utmost respect, recognizing the power and sacred nature of the spiritual journey you're setting out on.

As for the case at hand, Greg came to me in a desperate state. We initially met at one of my hypnotherapy workshops, and he wanted more. He was retired, in his early 50's and happily married. In fact, up until that point, he had what many people would describe as a dream life, which he'd made even dreamier by moving to a dream home in the dreamy countryside near Victoria, Canada, a charming place of cherry blossoms and mild climate. Sounds perfect, right? Well, it *was* perfect until the day he received a cancer diagnosis. According to his doctors, his stomach cancer was so advanced that nothing could be done about it, and it was only a matter of time—months, in fact—before he'd meet his Maker. After experiencing all the usual emotions that tend to erupt after a cancer diagnosis—anger and panic being at the top of the list—he had settled down enough to start looking for a way to deal with the traumatic news he had received. It was then that he remembered something. Years before he had read about how hypnosis helped people tap into the power of their own minds and thereby create positive change in their lives, so when he saw an ad for my workshop, he had jumped at the chance. After the workshop, he signed up for more. In our first one-on-one conversation, he said he wanted to "reframe" his mindset so as to take charge of his life at a time when he felt increasingly powerless; that way he could meet his future with dignity and courage. I told him he was already partway there: because being ready to change is key to the entire process.

We set to work immediately. First, we used hypnosis to turn down the volume on his emotions, which were understandably threatening to turn his life upside-down. Not only did he quickly learn how to separate himself from his fear, but he also became much calmer. His anger and resentment over being a "cancer victim" faded into the background, and the more that

happened, the more empowered and peaceful he felt. As it is for many people, hypnosis proved to be a way of initiating an *upward* spiral in his outlook, as one change reinforced another. He also started feeling healthier, and that wasn't just in his imagination. He *was* healthier, a fact reflected in medical tests. Those fast-marching cancer cells that had been eating him alive had mysteriously stopped in their tracks. His blood count had become almost normal, and so had his blood pressure.

Not only had these physical improvements occurred, but his interpersonal relationships had also improved. Because of his newfound sense of calm, his communication skills improved, something that often happens when hypnosis slows down the monkey mind, stopping it from blurting out hurtful or inappropriate comments—a common predicament among people with minds that are sometimes too sharp for their own good.

Having proved to his medical team that there really was something to this whole "hypnosis thing," Greg was hungry to do more. Led by a hunch, he sought to delve more deeply into his subconscious mind and see what was there: something told him he needed to return to my chair and build upon the foundation we had created. Over the course of several lengthy sessions, Greg went back to a previous lifetime as a warrior who was constantly on guard against his enemies. It was a bleak and terror-filled life, one of continual warfare in which anger and violence blotted out softer human qualities such as empathy and creativity. Indulging in the latter would have meant becoming vulnerable, and in that particular era, becoming vulnerable meant dying. Greg was forced to learn how to compartmentalize his emotional side: otherwise, he would have been unable to function as a soldier. Even though doing so leads to a state of emotional deadening that frequently carries over between lifetimes, it's understandable why it occurs: it's the survival instinct on full display. It sometimes results in an inability to feel anything, which leads to physical manifestations of the most terrible varieties imaginable, cancer among them. From my perspective, there is only one way to correct this, and that's by going back to the source. For Greg, that meant watching himself doing things he had never done—or even contemplated doing—in his current life, such as killing, raping and

looting. It meant watching himself set fire to villages, pillage homes, and commit shocking acts of barbarity. During his warrior lifetime, he had done it all without a speck of emotion, like a robot programmed to annihilate. Year after year, he had gone about his warlike ways, swallowing all hesitation and suppressing all of his finer instincts until the very last minute of his very last day, when he had died a lonely death on a battlefield.

Watching this from the safety of my hypnotherapy chair, he came to important realizations. For one, he realized that he had transferred some of the personality traits and thoughts patterns from that terrible lifetime into his current lifetime. Before he had retired, his career had been in a science-based industry in which he had carried out his activities in a manner that was completely disconnected from creativity and emotion; he no longer believed that career choice had been accidental. He became convinced that his bottled-up emotions were at the root of his cancer; he also became deeply interested in seeking forgiveness for all he had done in that previous time. While he knew he couldn't change the past, he wanted to change his *relationship* to the past—and his relationship to the present. Both were doable.

Armed with a new sense of resolve, he continued his hypnosis work, hopeful he could repair his personal relationships and slow down the spread of his cancer even further. He accomplished both. Medical tests showed significant progress, perplexing his astonished medical team. The day came —months after the time he was supposed to have died—when he practically bounced into my office with sensational news. The cancer had gone into remission. It was like somebody had pressed the stop button on his inner battlefield. As for his outer battlefield, that too saw major improvement: he was able to mend several broken relationships, including those with his own children, two of whom had become estranged from him.

This upward trajectory held steady for two years, during which time he made a significant discovery, itself the result of another ride in my chair. During one of his weekly hypnosis sessions, he had "dipped" into his subconscious once more, this time stumbling upon a lifetime in which instead of being a warrior, he had been an artist who worked with wood.

Inspired, when he went home he set about building himself a small studio in which to make wood carvings, even though he'd never carved a thing in his life. He learned this "new" art form practically overnight. Everyone precious to him received a hand-carved piece from his new studio as a token of his love. And during his last session with me, he told me that he'd finally found what he was looking for, and that everything in his life finally made sense.

It was, he said, like he had come home.

About three years later—five years after his terminal cancer diagnosis—Greg passed away. When the time came for him to leave his body, everyone he loved was at his bedside: this time it wasn't a lonely death. As things turned out, he didn't die of cancer; the cancer had never returned. He died the way he wanted to die—of natural causes, surrounded by friends and family.

A true warrior of the spirit.

* * *

There is a post-script to this story, one I'm sure Greg would like me to share. After his death, his wife came to visit me. Sitting in my office sipping a cup of tea, she waited for a break in our conversation, then reached into her bag and drew out a gift. It was a silkscreen of a tree of life, a work of art she had been inspired to create by the life-changing hypnosis work Greg had done. When I look at it today, I think of Greg's life, and in particular his epic battle with his own soul, and I smile because I know that despite all the difficulties he endured, when all was said and done, it was a battle he had won.

CASE SIX

“Anna”

What lies beyond the conscious mind? Pretty much everything. To me, consciousness is a surface phenomenon, the fleeting waves of an immense sea that connects all of humanity. Beyond that sea is an even greater ocean, one made of many higher levels of being that mystics throughout the ages have given multiple names. God, Superconsciousness, the Spirit World, the Other Side; Heaven, Valhalla, Paradise, and so on. Personally, I don’t care what you call it; I don’t put much stock in labels. My sole focus as a healer is to heal. Labels and preconceptions often get in the way, so I don’t get attached to them. Whatever you want to call that greater reality beyond this one, I have become convinced, after decades of helping people do spiritual work, that such a higher plane not only exists, but it is infinite in size, brimming with wisdom, and capable of being explored through hypnosis, meditation and the mysterious process known as dreaming. However, even though we can expand our conscious understanding of the Great Beyond, we still have limitations. Our conscious minds function like spotlights that can only point at one place at a time. This means that as long as we inhabit limited bodies with limited brains, we will only be able to understand and experience a limited amount at any given time. This is why a single hypnotherapy session can only achieve so much: the conscious mind has to process what is revealed, which takes time, no matter how good we are at incorporating the results into our daily routines. The Higher Self who inhabits the realm beyond consciousness—or Deep Mind, call it what you will—has far more information and wisdom than we will ever be able to process, even in multiple lifetimes, so it’s actually a good thing that its secrets are only divulged one or two at a time. It would be too much for anyone to handle were the situation

otherwise. Nevertheless, when the Higher Self does speak to us, the results can be profoundly transformational. Even if all we get is a glimpse of the vistas it sees or a fragment of the knowledge it possesses, that is often enough to change our world irrevocably.

Now for Anna, one of my most interesting clients. Anna was a talented graphic designer and artist who came to me complaining of claustrophobia, a condition she'd had since a young age. She could pinpoint no obvious causes for the problem, which she was desperate to overcome. Not only had she been suffering from it for most of her life, but recently her symptoms had become even worse. The vast majority of us don't even notice when we're in small, confined spaces, but for someone suffering from her condition, even everyday experiences like being inside a small room (particularly one with no windows) or in an airplane can be terrifying. In Anna's case, she had spent a lifetime trying to avoid such situations, but a dear friend's upcoming birthday party was creating a huge dilemma for her: it was being held in a restaurant on the very top of a local hotel. To get there, she would either have to walk eighteen floors up a windowless, airless stairwell or get inside a small elevator and take an agonizing journey up to the top. Both options filled her with horror, but she didn't want to disappoint her friend by not attending the celebration. Fortunately, she was given considerable advance notice of the event, because it took a lot of soul-searching before she was able to proceed.

Once she was sitting on my comfy chair with a cup of tea in her hand, she began opening up. In addition to feeling the extreme anxiety that accompanies her condition, she admitted to using claustrophobia as an excuse to get out of doing things she didn't want to do—an avoidance technique that is not uncommon, and one most of us use from time to time. In her case, however, it was an added complication, as she was afraid of what her life would be like once she could no longer use claustrophobia as an excuse: in other words, she was afraid of living *with* claustrophobia, and of living life *without* it, making her situation doubly difficult. She had also been having intense dreams in which she had found herself climbing a mountain, full of fear—also unsurprising, given the mountain of fear she

had been climbing her entire life.

After she had settled in somewhat, I used an induction technique to help her relax further. Given what she was experiencing, I knew it would be a big achievement for her to simply lower the volume on her fear, so once she was in a state of deep trance, I let her stay there for over an hour without doing anything more. When she finally emerged, she was feeling far more relaxed—and pleased with her progress. Confident that we had begun to build a strong platform on which to proceed, we agreed to meet again and dive in a bit deeper the next time. After all, there's no point in rushing. She wanted a long-term solution, and was clearly ready to work toward one.

During her second session, she entered a deep trance state as if she had been doing all it all her life. It doesn't always happen that fast; for some it takes many sessions before they have that level of comfort. Becoming comfortable with the trance state is a process that generally takes time, though the personal investment is always worth it. Once I was sure she was thoroughly relaxed, I gave her a suggestion: namely, that she was walking down a long hallway, with doors on both sides, and that she could open whichever door she liked, because behind one of them would be something important for her—wisdom, knowledge, an experience, a memory—that would help her get to the root of her problem. After a few minutes, she said:

"Everything's very white and bright. There doesn't seem to be any real difference between the walls and the floor. Does that make any sense? It's like there is light everywhere I look. Everything is, um, kind of floating, like it's all suspended in the air. It's really difficult to describe, but it's amazing."

After reassuring her that everything was moving forward just as it should, a few moments later she added:

"I'm now seeing a door—a bright red door."

"Good," I said. "Can you describe it further?"

She nodded, her eyes still closed. "It has six squares on it," she said, "and a golden door knob." She drew in a quick breath; from across the room, I could sense her awe at what she was witnessing on the movie screen of her inner mind. "There's golden light coming out from beneath the door," she

added, almost at a whisper. “It’s just amazing. It feels so…so *good*. *I* feel so good. I really love this place, wherever it is.”

“Then just enjoy it for a few minutes,” I said. Sometimes clients get so “blissed out” at what they experience during hypnosis that I leave them there for a while, for obvious reasons. After all, bliss is good. Following a brief pause of no more than five minutes, she spoke again:

“I want to open that door and see what’s behind it.”

I suggested she do just that. After another pause, she spoke again. First, she expressed discomfort. She said she was feeling a heavy weight on her chest—the same thing she always felt whenever entering a small space. I suggested that she take a deep breath and relax even further. She inhaled, and reported that the sensation was melting away as quickly as it had come. Once it had left, she began seeing something new: but what she was seeing wasn’t perfectly clear at the beginning, as it came to her in fragments, almost like burst after burst of information, but in the form of something akin to a series of short video clips. In my notes, I wrote them down: “I just keep seeing a family having a picnic.” “I see a man, a man from another time.” “Someone is telling me it’s 1895.” “There’s a mother and a father and a baby. They’re having a picnic. The baby is lying on a red picnic blanket.”

The picture—initially a happy one—emerged rapidly, though in fits and starts. Over the course of that session, Anna saw the same family again and again, from different angles and at different phases of their picnic. It was like her subconscious was giving her time to reacquaint herself with an old, but important, memory before taking her further—and then, suddenly, it *did* take her further. For once she had become very clear in her mind that it was *her* family who was having the picnic, and that she, in fact, was the baby on the red blanket, something terrible happened. I asked:

“What are you experiencing right now? Can you tell me?”

“I keep picturing a bag. It’s a brown bag, a brown *leather* bag, and I—”

She stopped suddenly. I instantly sensed her anxiety level rising, so I quickly gave the suggestion that she was completely relaxed and able to watch from a safe distance. That did the trick. Her face visibly relaxed.

After a short pause, she continued describing her experience.

"I feel like I'm getting scooped up by someone," she said. "I feel like I'm being scooped up and taken away." There was another long pause, and then she continued: "I'm getting the details more clearly now. Those parents, they're my parents. I can see them clearly." She went on to describe the man and woman in considerable detail: the mother was in a pretty blue dress; the father wore old clothes, but was ruggedly handsome, with a moustache. It was a happy scene, and it was understandable that she had gone back to it, but since the bag had appeared to her just as the anxiety had, I knew that was where she had to go, even if it meant enduring more discomfort. I gently prodded her to return by saying:

"Anna, what do you need to know about that bag?"

She paused briefly. Then the words started coming out of her mouth in a jumble: "It feels like, like I was snatched. The baby—*me*—I was kidnapped! That's what happened! A man walked away with a bag over his shoulder, and I was inside it!" Tears began running down her cheeks, and her words all began running together. "I can see my parents, they're pacing back and forth, my mother is sobbing, they're worrying themselves sick looking for me but I'm not there, I'm somewhere else."

"Do you know where you are?"

"I'm in the bag, and I *really* don't want to be! I'm scared. I'm really, really scared."

Anna's fear was plain to see: her face had turned scarlet red, an indication that she was having a major abreaction, a common psychological response that sometimes has physical manifestations, especially when someone re-experiences a highly traumatic event. This is a key part of the process of releasing repressed emotion, however, and not something to avoid. My mantra has long been *feel and release*: feel the old emotion and let it go. That's how people heal. From my experience, it is really the only way to get rid of problems like the one Anna had experienced since childhood. When her face started turning bright red and splotchy, I knew we were getting somewhere. Now it was just a matter of keeping her relaxed through the process. After giving her another suggestion to do just that, I let her settle

into a deep trance state in order to calm her further and aid the integration process. Later, once she was out of trance, she added additional details that complemented what she had already said about that day. She had been kidnapped as a small baby. The kidnapper was a man with long gray hair who had snatched her up when her parents were momentarily distracted, shoving her into a leather satchel and whisking her home to his wife. Although the experience was terrifying and confusing—and clearly at the root of her claustrophobia—as it turned out, the perpetrators of the act were not monsters, but a childless couple who desperately wanted a baby in their lives. Anna also suspected that the couple who stole her may have been somewhat mentally challenged, as well, and therefore did not fully realize the enormity of the crime they had committed: they actually hadn't meant any harm. Though torn from her biological parents in a manner that caused a ripple effect across multiple lifetimes, as things transpired, Anna grew up in a loving home anyway—a surprising outcome and one that should help discount the idea that Anna's subconscious was just weaving a fear-based scenario for its own benefit. For if it *was* just a fear-based fantasy, wouldn't the thieves have played more predictable roles, say as baby-stealing ogres?

Once we had established a clear idea of what had happened that day, I moved Anna ahead in time to a point where the event's full significance would become apparent. Her subconscious mind would know exactly where that was—after all, it remembers *everything*—and it indeed it did. After a few minutes, she told me a new scene was emerging before her mind's eye: it was a memory from her current lifetime, from when she was only five years of age. It was the first time she had felt that awful feeling of claustrophobia. I asked her to describe what she was experiencing. She replied:

"I'm in a tube slide with other kids. It's winter, and I'm in Ontario. I'm all crammed in there, inside this bright red tube slide."

The color was highly significant. The door she had seen earlier, at the beginning of her trance, had been red, as had the picnic blanket. Now she was a child trapped inside a confined space—a red slide. My intuition told me this was exactly where she needed to be in order to bring about healing.

I asked her to continue.

"I can't breathe," she said momentarily. "I'm going into a panic. I'm kicking the kid in front of me just so I can get out of this crappy tube. There, I got out! Oh my gosh, the slide is triggering my panic—it's *exactly* like I'm that baby again being trapped inside the satchel!"

She started slipping into a heightened state of anxiety, so I decided it was necessary to intervene. I quickly reminded her that she was safe and sound, and that the event in question was firmly in the past, where it couldn't harm her. She responded by settling down quickly, allowing me to introduce additional suggestions that relaxed her even more. It was quite clear that she—with the cooperation of her subconscious—had identified the culprit memory from a previous lifetime (i.e., *the red blanket kidnapping*) as well as the triggering experience in her current lifetime (*the red slide incident*). She had even explicitly used the term *trigger*, which just shows how intelligent and self-aware the subconscious truly is. We finished her trance session by allowing her to quietly integrate the experience while being "retrained" via hypnotic suggestion. This refers to additional suggestions made by the hypnotist that reinforce a sense of safety and calm whenever presented with similar situations in future—standard clinical hypnosis techniques, in other words.

To illustrate how effective hypnotic regression can be, allow me to tell you what happened following her session that day. Anna and I left my office together, using the elevator to ride from the lower level, where my office was situated, to the third floor, and from there back down to the ground floor. She showed no visible signs of distress; in fact, she seemed completely relaxed. A week later, she attended her friend's birthday party, riding the elevator all the way up to the eighteenth floor with a triumphant smile plastered all over her face. Her claustrophobia was all but gone. Only once did it ever return. That took the form of a wave of emotion that came over her at the beginning of a subsequent elevator ride. Fortunately, however, it melted away almost as quickly as it arrived—in two heartbeats, as she put it—never to return again, leaving her free to take as many elevator rides as she pleased.

Mission accomplished.

But as an old teacher of mine once put it, we are all artists working on perpetually unfinished works of art: and those unfinished works of art are ourselves. As long as we are on this plane of existence, we are never complete on a spiritual level, as Anna was about to realize. About a year or so later, she came to see me again. As we sipped tea and chatted about life, she told me about an emerging issue that was threatening both her relationship with her partner and her peace of mind. This time it was something just as serious as claustrophobia, but more slippery and nebulous. She initially described the problem as not being fully present, a sin we are all guilty of committing from time to time, but as I probed for more information, it became apparent it was more than that. For example, when she walked down the street, listening to music on her iPod, she would sometimes find herself (as she put it) "blanking out" and "disappearing into another world." While working as a designer, the same thing would happen, and she would frequently lose her train of thought, forget her place in a conversation or just find her focus drifting away from her clients. Wherever she really was at those times, it wasn't where she was supposed to be—or wanted to be. Instead, she was spontaneously slipping into a type of reverie state, which by itself might not be so bad (after all, we all daydream from time to time, and in small doses, that's healthy, particularly for artists), but in her case, it was threatening her relationship, her work and her state of mind. It was made even more troubling by the fact that it was often coupled with serious memory loss. She would have no recollection whatsoever of what she had been doing just fifteen minutes earlier. Worse yet, when she had arguments with her lover (an unfortunate situation that was occurring with unsettling frequency), the next day she couldn't even remember *having* an argument, let alone what was discussed. It was like she hadn't been emotionally present for the arguments. Was she losing her memory? While dementia can occur even in young people, neither of us thought that was the case. She could remember the movie she watched last week or the clothing she wore on her 4th birthday—just not what happened yesterday during a spat with a loved one. Still, the situation worried her immensely, as she was

known within her clan as the family chronicler—the one "in charge" of collective memories, a responsibility she took seriously. During get-togethers, she'd be the one called upon to clarify or recall past events of joint importance to her siblings and relatives. If her affliction were to worsen, would that role be at risk? She suspected her subconscious was blocking her for some reason, and she wondered if hypnosis could help.

I was confident it could. After putting her into a deep state of hypnosis, I waited until I was sure she was thoroughly relaxed before asking her subconscious mind to answer the key question—namely, where and when did the problem begin? What was its source? The response was not long in coming. Within about ten minutes, her face became flushed, displaying the same crimson color as in earlier sessions—a good sign, and one that meant she was going where she needed to go. She soon started sobbing, and tears began pouring down her cheeks.

"This is all about my grandmother," she revealed. "I'm shutting down because of her—because I'm so afraid of becoming *like* her."

I reminded her she was in a safe place where nothing could harm her. Once I knew she was calm enough to proceed, I asked her to elaborate upon what she had just said.

"I'm seeing my grandmother right now," she replied.

Knowing that her grandmother was no longer on the physical plane, I immediately suspected Anna was suffering from some form of delayed mourning, something many of us have experienced, even if it doesn't always register on a conscious level. I knew it could manifest in many different forms; could it explain her episodic shutdowns?

"How does it make you feel, seeing her?" I asked gently.

"I just feel *so* bad for her. And so fearful that I'll become her."

"Ask yourself why you feel that way," I suggested.

"I just watch her and see a woman who hated her entire life. Everything she had, she never wanted any of it. She didn't want her kids, she didn't want her marriage, she didn't want her life. I'm sure she hated every single day. She was just so *robbed*." Anna was trembling with emotion. There was a brief pause, and then she continued. "I was really close to her when I was

a kid," she added. "And I'm just *so* incredibly scared of ending up like her. I think that's why part of me is just freezing—because I'm petrified."

Clearly this was a breakthrough moment, and Anna needed time to properly digest it fully. Above all, her repressed emotions regarding her grandmother needed to come up and exit her body before they were able to do irreparable harm. I spent some time reassuring her that she was perfectly capable of living a full and happy life, and that she shouldn't be afraid she would end up as miserable as her grandmother had obviously been. But I also told her that everyone has his or her own path and purpose on this level of reality, and her grandmother was no exception to the rule. It wasn't up to us to evaluate the paths of others; her grandmother may have even had her reasons for leading the kind of life that she had. We just couldn't know. What we *could* know is that Anna needn't be afraid of becoming a duplicate of any of her ancestors. After a good half hour of using hypnotic suggestion to "reprogram" her thinking in this respect, and observing that she had calmed down considerably, I asked her to go to the precise moment in her life when she had first made the choice to not be fully present—the chief symptom of her troublesome condition. I added:

"When you go there, find out what you need to know about it."

After a few minutes, her face turned scarlet again, and she blurted out:

"I feel like I have to be more aware of each passing moment—to enjoy them." After a pause, she connected this realization with her grandmother. "Grandma died when I was only sixteen, and it still hurts thinking about it." Pause. "I really don't think she ever lived her life the way *she* wanted to live it. And if I don't live my life the way *I* want to live it, I'll get sick just like she did. I was just so close to her that when she died, I couldn't face it. I think of her sometimes, and all this plugged-up emotion rises up from inside me and gets stuck in my throat. It just freezes there, and it freezes *me*. It all just makes me want to shut down."

As she was speaking, she had been crying buckets of tears, just like small children do when they cry—with full abandon. To help her release further, I suggested she send her grandmother all the love in her heart—a gift beyond words that is capable of traveling between the worlds. I also encouraged her

to let herself really *feel* her own love, both for her grandmother and for herself, something many of us have difficulty doing. I then focused my efforts on getting her to feel the joy associated with all her happy memories of her grandmother, especially those moments when a grandchild really connects with her grandparent. I knew her delayed grieving and repressed emotions were pushing those more positive emotions aside, and wanted her to feel them, instead of the fear and sadness she had learned to associate with her grandmother's life and death. Then, once this was done, she quite calmly said:

"I feel like a whistling tea kettle about to blow my lid."

Translated, that meant she needed time to process all the emotions that were bubbling up to the surface. After putting her into a calmer state and giving her additional suggestions to facilitate matters, we agreed to resume the next time we met. Over the course of next six months, I saw Anna only a few times. Such infrequency is not unusual, as everyone's healing journey operates on a different schedule unique to the individual. Intervals between sessions also allow people to do their homework (something I always give them), and of course it's up to them whether it gets done. In Anna's case, she was clearly doing hers. Each time I saw her, she reported positive results, and we continued to work on issues related to memory enhancement and relaxation, but all in all, it was a gradual process that took time. We could both tell she was making progress, even if the peeling off of one layer revealed another waiting for us below. One day, however, she made a great leap forward. It was almost as if her subconscious had gotten tired of the baby steps and wanted to step up the pace. Her breakthrough took the form of an *aha* moment that I can still remember clear as a bell. During the trance state, after we had spent time focusing on developing inner tranquility, she said something that stood out not only for the degree of self-knowledge it contained, but for the extremely self-confident way she expressed it.

"I have been absorbing other people's troubles," she announced, "and taking them on as my own. I'm going to stop that now. What happened is that doing so created a pain layer on the top of my body."

There was something about the way she said this that made my ears really prick up and listen. When someone says something with supreme self-confidence and determination, you immediately notice. It's in their tone of voice; it's in how they project themselves. In this case, *how* she said what she said—so calmly, yet so authoritatively—made me suspect this was coming from a much higher part of her being. It was as if I were suddenly in the presence of someone who was used to being listened to: like a commander or a general, not a victim. *A pain layer?* Now, that was intriguing. I asked her to elaborate.

"It's kind of like a surface layer of fat," she explained, again with great calm and poise. "It prevents me from being touchable. It's pain-energy that accumulates through absorption from other people. It makes me super sensitive. If someone touches me, it's like I recoil instantly."

What she was saying—more importantly, *how* she was saying it—didn't sound much like her at all, but that didn't matter. Her words held great insight and explanatory power. *That* mattered. And even though she was using the word "I," this was clearly not the "I" that usually sat in my chair. This was a much deeper "I," an "I" that was most definitely in command. After pausing briefly, she went on:

"I wasn't ready for this issue to come up in previous sessions with you, but now I am. The mental training you've provided has allowed me to see this layer of myself clearly for the first time. And now that I can see it, I know how to stop it."

"How?"

She proceeded to give me a step-by-step description of the process she intended to follow. "The first step is awareness," she explained. "I have that now, thanks to our time together."

"And the second?"

"The second step," she replied, "is slowing down, taking each moment one at a time, and creating safe boundaries. Safe boundaries will stop me from absorbing more pain than I can handle. I deal with people all the time, and I really care about them—I care about them so much I take their troubles on as my own *far* too readily. I can still care about others, but

without taking on so much of their baggage. Their baggage is their baggage. I don't need to be everyone's 'go-to girl,' the person who listens to everyone's problems and tries to solve them *for* them. I can listen and be compassionate—I wouldn't be me, otherwise—but also let them know that their problems are theirs, and theirs alone."

There was a long pause during which I wondered, with a mixture of amusement and amazement, if she should become *my* therapist. I then asked:

"Do you feel ready?"

"Yes," she replied, her voice still ringing with that authoritative tone. "I don't want to be tired anymore. My mental computer is burnt out. My body can't even feel the way it needs to feel. This is contributing to the shutdowns I've been experiencing, and making me forget things. I just tune out whenever things get too much to handle."

I did the best thing I could think of doing: I praised her for having such a breakthrough. Then I gently prodded her into elaborating upon her new plan. What she said next was, once again, startling for the amount of self-awareness her words contained; then again, having had the pleasure of dealing with this level of intelligence in the past, perhaps it wasn't so surprising, after all.

"Like my claustrophobia," she explained matter-of-factly, "the pain layer will diminish over time through sheer awareness. The biggest part is the *knowing*. It won't live in my system anymore; I won't allow it to. It flared up quickly; it can vanish quickly too. *I want it to.* I'm picturing it shrinking right now. I'm fully done with that part of me."

As far as I was concerned, this was an example of profound self-insight worthy of the term *revelation*. Pleased with her progress, I ended the session after letting her quietly stay in trance for a while, just so she could really feel the presence of this more confident self that had arisen. It was quite a transformation, and welcome on multiple fronts. And it wasn't a mirage. Things did change for the better after that. Her stress levels dropped, her memory skills rebounded, and her ability to be emotionally present around others improved considerably. The release of all that pent-up

emotion, along with her acknowledgement of this mysterious "pain layer," caused ripple effects that touched every area of her life.

I remain convinced that I had encountered her Higher Self—that wiser and more knowledgeable part of the human being which I believe exists in us all, but which tends to stay aloof from our daily affairs. Our concerns are generally not its concerns; our minds are generally focused on things it considers unimportant. Keeping up with the Joneses, buying the latest model of car, agonizing over apparel decisions—it has zero interest in such matters despite the fact that they consume most of our time. Is it any wonder, then, that in most of us it keeps to itself and plays hard to get? In Anna's case, it did, in fact, emerge, but only with the help of hypnosis, regression work, and her own dedication to the healing process. And speaking of this latter factor, I cannot emphasize enough how critical it is to healing. People are their own best healers; it's just that in our society we are far too dependent on experts to do it for us. When all was said and done, Anna was healed by her own mind. For one brief moment, the deepest part of her—the Deep Mind—came out into the open to illuminate her path. Even though she only had a single glimpse of it, a single glimpse was enough. Buddha once said that instead of worshipping him, you should "find the lamp within yourself" and "be your own refuge." Anna had done precisely that. She had found that lamp, and used it to light her way. Although I was with her that day, it was the Deep Mind who was the true healer. It was this higher aspect of her own being whose insight and self-knowledge helped win the battle her soul was waging, scoring a major victory on behalf of self-transformation. My own part in that victory was a minor one.

I just arranged for the two of them to meet.

“Lost and Found”

I’ve always had a knack for finding lost objects. Even when I was a child, family members asked me for help finding lost toys or earrings, and more often than not, the location of the lost object would just pop into my mind. The only real difference between what I do now and what I did then is that instead of family members, it’s members of the public who come to me for help in this regard. That is why I wasn’t surprised at all by the story about the American dowser who located a stolen harp for a Californian psychiatrist. I’ve known all my life that some people just have the knack. In my first book, I mentioned the time I helped a bank employee locate lost paperwork for a million-dollar transaction—a loss that would’ve damaged her career if it hadn’t been promptly corrected.

Another case involved valuables whose location had been forgotten by their owner, who suffered from early-onset dementia. The woman had lost track of money and jewelry that she had hidden before moving to Canada. I located the lost items, which were successfully recovered. The interesting thing? She had not only forgotten that she had stashed the items in a box of antique books, but the box itself had been mislaid by the moving company. This rules out the possibility that I had located the items by reading her mind, because even on a subconscious level, she didn’t know where the box was. And in fact, I couldn’t have read anyone’s mind at the moving company either, for while they knew the location of the box (for they had moved it), they were unaware of its contents. So how did I do it? I have no idea.

But I *did* do it.

Another example that’s a bit closer to home involved my sister-in-law and her son. One fine spring day, they joined my husband and me for a walk

to Victoria's Beacon Hill Park. Once we were halfway there, her son realized he had lost an expensive electronic device. Both he and his mother were upset, as neither could afford to replace it. I paused for a moment, and an image flashed across my mind. Guided by what I had seen, I led my husband back to the underground parking garage in the building where we lived. There, in visitor's parking, I saw my sister-in-law's vehicle. Without looking inside, I went to the exact place where the small device had been displayed in my mind's eye, and voila, there it was, lying just where I'd pictured it, on the floor next to the car. I hadn't even known where the vehicle had been parked, as we had met them outside the building, where there was ample street parking. Even if I had somehow guessed that he had dropped it while getting out of the car, I had no idea that the car was inside the garage.

I could easily list off reams and reams of such examples, but for now, I'll just provide two more: one is another case involving missing valuables, and the other involves a missing boy. In the first, a woman came to see me because she couldn't locate a small fortune in pearls and cash that her husband had hidden. It was difficult to say whether he had told her the location of the missing treasure, as she, like the woman in the previous case of missing treasure, was clearly suffering from memory impairment. All she could say is that she was "pretty sure" it was somewhere in her house. As we sat and drank tea together, she told me about the lost items. They included her grandmother's pearls, her grandfather's gold pocket watch, as well as tens of thousands of dollars. Other than that, her memory was pretty much a dead end. She and her family had already scoured the entire house, a process that included searching through every nook and cranny they could think of. If it was there, it had been extremely well hidden. It was imperative that she find the items for two reasons: she was due to make a costly move into a care home for the elderly, and some of the jewelry had great sentimental value.

As she was telling me all this, I received one of my "downloads." It came in the form of successive images that flashed across my mind, along with some information. In one image, I saw what appeared to be a sort of fairy

door—you know, like the little doors people place at the bottom of tree trunks. In this case, however, the door wasn't located at the base of a tree, but on a wall behind a deep freeze. The door immediately reminded me of the old-fashioned milk-box attached to the house I had grown up in—back in those days, that's where the milkman would deliver milk. The difference between the milk-box and the one I was seeing in this image, however, was that a milk-box has a knob, and this one didn't. As for the deep freeze, it looked like it was situated in a dugout basement, the kind that is only half the depth of a normal house basement. The second image was of an old leather satchel covered with writing. I knew that the satchel was not just a container, but that it had deep historical significance for the family, but I couldn't say why.

When I conveyed this information to my client, she immediately thought I was on to something: her home *did* have a dugout basement, and it was very difficult to access, as it wasn't much more than a crawl space. It also contained a deep freeze. She confirmed that the family did have a satchel like the one I had described to her, but it had been missing for years. As for the writing I had seen on its surface, that, too, was a successful "hit" on my part. Years before, various family members had recorded genealogical information about births and deaths on outside of the bag.

Following our session that day, she went home and, with her family's assistance, investigated to see if there was anything to my "visions." There was. Hidden behind the deep freeze, they found a small door built into the wall of the basement. Opening it, they discovered the satchel. Inside was the missing treasure. There was only small problem: mice had chewed through the leather, destroying some of the genealogical information.

The second example I wish to share doesn't have a happy ending. It involves a middle-aged woman who came my way asking for help finding her boy, who had gone missing weeks earlier. Despite extensive searches carried out by friends, family, volunteers and the police, nobody had been able to locate him. Over a cup of tea, I asked her to describe him. She said he was an introvert who always seemed troubled, and that he liked to wander off "into the bush" (as she put it) in search of solitude. He trusted

almost no one, and kept himself aloof from friends and family. As the woman talked, two things happened almost simultaneously. First, I felt the distinct sensation of coarse rope between my thumb and index finger. Without being able to explain how, I knew, in that moment, that the rope had originally been white—sailor's rope. In my mind's eye, I traced the course of the rope upward—up, up, up until I saw it was hanging from a branch of a weeping willow tree. I instantly knew what that meant, but the image itself still seemed odd to my conscious mind, as I knew such trees were uncommon on the West Coast. Nevertheless, that's what I was given, and I had to accept the information without questioning or interpreting it. The second thing that happened is that I heard a song—a famous song by the Eagles called "Your Lying Eyes." It was so loud and so sudden that it literally hurt my ears. Although that's not the sort of music I tend to listen to these days (I prefer classical), the song itself was familiar to me from high school. What I heard that day in my office, however, was a slightly different version of the original: the music was the same, but the lyrics had been changed. In the original, the lyrics were:

You can't hide your lyin' eyes
And your smile is a thin disguise
Thought by now you'd realize
There ain't no way to hide your lyin' eyes
Honey, you can't hide your lyin' eyes

In this version, the lyrics were:

There ain't no way to hide your lying eyes
Honey you can't hide your lying eyes
You sure know how to arrange things

It wasn't the first time I had received information in this manner, with lyrics altered to suit a particular situation. I have long suspected there's something about music that allows it to travel through the "veil" between

worlds—or, if you prefer, between the subconscious and the conscious—allowing information to "piggy-back" on top of it from one realm to the other. In this instance, what the music was telling me was pretty straightforward. The woman sitting across from me holding a teacup in her hand wasn't telling me the truth—at least not the *whole* truth. For the next little while, I started asking her gentle, but probing, questions to see if my hunch was correct. As it turned out, it was.

The situation was *much* more complicated than she had initially let on. She revealed that she had been forced into an unhappy marriage in her teens when her son was born. Her husband, a nasty type, had beaten her and tormented their son. But as she continued to talk, that same Eagles song kept going round and round in my head, so I knew there was something she was leaving out, so I kept on asking more questions. Then it all came out, and as soon as it did, the song stopped. Her husband hadn't just "tormented" the boy: he had raped him. And not only that, but she had *known* about it the whole time—and chosen to look the other way. Through a cascade of tears, she made a full confession: ignoring the abuse of her son was her way of surviving a terrible ordeal. Thinking her boy's spirit was strong enough to cope with her husband's violent ways, she had thrown her child to the wolves in order to save herself. Eventually, she had escaped the clutches of her husband and remarried, subsequently bearing two more children with her second husband. But her first son had never recovered from his awful experiences with his biological father. He never properly integrated into her new family, and he never allowed anyone to get too close to him. That's why he was always troubled and had started disappearing for long stretches of time. Hearing this, the last lyrics of that song echoed through my mind: *"You sure know how to arrange things."*

Yes, she certainly did.

For she *had* arranged things. It had been within her power to at least *try* to stop the abuse, but she hadn't lifted a finger. Sadly, I strongly suspected there wasn't anything that could be done for the boy anymore: the rope in my vision had told me that he was already beyond any help from anyone on this plane of existence. All we could do now was heal and move on. It

wasn’t my place to judge; it was my place to give whatever aid I could. She needed resolution. I needed to help her get it. I asked, as gently as I could, whether her son had a special spot he liked to visit, especially one with trees. At first, she couldn’t think of one, but then she remembered that she had taken her boy to her grandfather’s cabin a few times. It was a long way out of the city and basically in the middle of nowhere. Without being specific about what I had seen, I strongly urged her to tell the police about that location and ask if they would check it for her.

They did.

They discovered that her son had taken a bus to a nearby town and then walked ten miles to his great-grandfather’s cabin, which had been abandoned for years. And that is where they found his body, hanging from a white sailor’s rope tied to a branch of a weeping willow tree.

“Little Angels”

Over the course of the past twenty-five or so years, thousands of people have sat in my hypnosis chair. That makes it difficult to choose which cases should be included in this book and which should be left out. I’ve tried to include as wide a range as possible so that readers could see just how many different types of people can benefit from the deep, personal journey that hypnotherapy offers. I want people to realize that their minds are far more powerful, far more interesting, and far more multi-layered than is generally understood to be the case. One of the unfortunate side effects of the age in which we live is that most of us have come to believe that there are no great mysteries left to explore—that practically everything worth exploring or understanding has already been explored or understood. It’s all been done before, right?

Well, if this book has achieved anything, it’s to show that this is far from the truth. There *are* still mysteries. They may not be “out there” in the external world, where science has myopically focused its attention for the last few centuries, but they exist, and each of us can play a part in investigating them. The mysteries I’m talking about are *inner* mysteries—of mind and soul. There are many who would like you to believe that such mysteries do not exist. There are many who are threatened by the very idea that they *could* exist. But few people, after thoughtfully reviewing the evidence assembled in this book, would agree with such a skeptical stance. As a civilization, we haven’t figured everything out. The human mind is still almost as much a mystery today as it was during the time of Socrates and Croesus. Winston Churchill once famously called Russia “a riddle wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.” That statement applies equally well to consciousness.

For centuries we have lived in a world of experts who apparently know everything about everything, and because of that, we have each become a little bit more powerless. It is my hope that this book has demonstrated that the experts are not quite as infallible as they would like you to believe. If at least some of you reach the conclusion that perhaps—just perhaps—the universe is the mysterious place we say it is, then we will have succeeded in our task. And if some of you seek out such healing modalities as hypnosis, meditation and the others mentioned in this book, then we'll be ecstatic.

But, you might object, aren't we just as guilty of setting ourselves up to be experts? Should everyone bow down to hypnotherapists and treat everything they say as gospel? Absolutely not! Hypnosis is not about that. It's not about someone having control over you. It's about someone facilitating *your* control over *yourself*: and that's a crucial distinction. A good hypnotherapist is simply someone who can get you to use the power you already have—the power that most of you don't even realize you have. Hypnosis is, always has been, and always will be about power-sharing and cooperation. And you know who best understands and appreciates the power of cooperation?

Children.

That's why our final cases are about them.

* * *

In an earlier section, we reviewed several compelling cases in which children spontaneously remembered past lives—and, in the process, provided an incredible amount of information about their previous identities. Even without my work as a hypnotherapist, I would have found the cases involving the American boy who could remember his previous life as a Second World War fighter pilot and the Indian girl who could remember her previous life in another city as convincing: the level of verifiable detail they provided was just too great to dismiss. As I'm sure you'll also recall, Ian Stevenson's collection of cases included more than 200 in which children who remembered previous lives had matching physical anomalies that in some cases could be confirmed by the deceased

individual's autopsy record and photos. Many of you will no doubt be familiar with Wayne Dyer's work in this area, as well. An educational psychologist by training, Dyer's own children surprised him with stories about their experiences *prior* to being born. Realizing he was on to something, Dyer pored through the existing research on reincarnation, and then teamed up with another parent, Dee Garnes, who had been the recipient of similar tales from her own children. Together, they put out a request to the general public to see if others had had similar experiences with their own children. They were flooded with accounts from parents worldwide. As Dyer wrote:

> Dee and I have gone through thousands upon thousands of entries that were sent to us when we asked for personal anecdotes about young children's memories of heaven. So many of the stories that my own children relayed to me when they were just learning to talk, which I thought were unique to me and our family, have actually turned out to be quite universal in nature—countless people gave us almost identical stories about children reporting how they remembered choosing their parents for this journey, how they had invisible friends only they could see, memories of past lives in the same family, visitations with God, and on and on.[99]

Because their minds are less capable of blocking such memories from floating to the surface of their consciousness, children occupy a special place in the research on reincarnation undertaken by Stevenson, Dyer and others. In my own career, I've worked with children almost from the beginning, and I've always been amazed by the speed at which they "get" hypnosis. But even more amazing is their ability to *spontaneously* remember past lives. I never put such ideas into the minds of any of my clients, and in fact many of my clients do hypnosis work without having any past-life memories come to the fore—this includes clients who know full well what kind of work I do, and who come to me intending to learn about their past lives. Some people spend a very long time in my chair

before they can remember anything. There are simply too many internal barriers—the product of a lifetime of ignoring their inner lives—that get in the way. But children are so much closer to their inner realities that it's a simple matter for them to access memories that can take adults many months (sometimes years) of patient hypnosis work to remember.

Let's look at an example: the case of an eleven-year-old boy who came to see me. He'd been experiencing night terrors on a regular basis, and had a dreadful fear of death. Through hypnosis, he discovered a previous life in the ancient world in which he'd been born with a physical disability: his legs wouldn't function properly. When he wasn't housebound, he had to be carried everywhere. Because of the era in which he'd been born, he'd had few opportunities throughout his life and never fit in emotionally with peers or the community at large. Terrible as it sounds, he ended up being subjected to a so-called "mercy killing"—his own father took him away in the middle of the night and killed him, burying the boy in the forest on a moonlit night. Sitting in my chair, the child saw his own spirit rise up from the little boy's body and become free at last. Was that too traumatizing for an eleven-year-old to experience? Not at all. After reporting everything he witnessed during the trance state, he became calmer than his parents had ever seen him. Not only did he go on to have a "normal" childhood, but he never had another night terror again. That's a testament to the power of hypnotic regression.

A nine-year-old girl once came to me at the recommendation of her physician, who had done some of his own hypnotherapy work in my chair. As is not at all uncommon, the child had both a physical malady and a psychological one that accompanied it. Her left eye turned inward, she had to wear glasses, and she'd been subjected to merciless bullying of the kind that is familiar to almost every kid. As a consequence, she was becoming increasingly introverted. She didn't want to read, write or attend school. During hypnosis, she spontaneously blurted out that she had lived a previous lifetime in India. As she put it, she used to be a "grown-up" with long, black hair and a green, silky dress; she told me she wore open-toe sandals and gold bangles up and down her arms. But then, as part of an

arranged marriage, she had been forced to marry a very mean man who eventually stabbed her in the left eye, after which she couldn't see properly *or* wish to be seen. Other details from her story: she couldn't have a baby; she and her husband lived in a castle; her husband's family was extremely rich; her husband practiced polygamy and had another wife, as well as many children. Although she lived a life of great wealth and privilege, she felt like a prisoner: she was so lonely that she poisoned herself and died relatively young.

Following her regression work, she began changing. Much to her mother's delight, she became calmer, less introverted, and more like a normal, well-adjusted child. We continued to work together, focusing on the use of hypnosis to help correct her vision; this was supplemented by additional vision therapy work with medical practitioners. Within six months, the girl's eye had corrected itself, and she was like a new person. During one of our last sessions, she told me she was glad she had learned about her previous life as an Indian princess, as it gave her a chance to "make things right" in her current life. She said she wasn't going to follow that "old story line" that her previous life represented because, as she put it, "nowadays women can marry anyone they want and be free." When I saw her five years later, I could barely recognize her, she'd changed so radically. Now a very empowered and self-assured young lady, she told me the regression work she had done had changed her life forever.

Another child that came to me for help was Vivian. Only seven at the time, she had already had a rocky life despite her young age, and was, at the time of our first session, experiencing extreme anxiety. She had been sent home from school on numerous occasions after multiple bouts of projectile vomiting. Visits to her physician yielded no answers, so in desperation her mother decided to explore other avenues. Because I had already worked closely with Vivian's mom for a number of years, hypnosis was at the top of her list.

Because I knew the family already, I had some familiarity with Vivian's situation. Her parents had divorced shortly after her birth, but the split-up had been amicable, and Vivian was receiving ample love and support from

both of them, as well as from her grandparents. Her grandmother, in fact, was a retired daycare provider and thus highly competent when it came to dealing with children. On the surface, then, the extreme nature of Vivian's anxiety was puzzling. In many cases, I knew such psychological conditions simply disappeared over time as the child in question grew up, but neither her mother nor I wanted to wait that long, as Vivian had been born with a heart condition, a situation which high anxiety could further complicate. In short, this needed to be figured out, pronto.

During our first few sessions together, we focused on role-playing. Children love to play, and Vivian was no exception. We had ourselves a little tea party that centered around the antique tea trolley which occupies a prominent position in my office: Vivian dressed for the occasion by putting on my hat and gloves, playing her part as a little lady to perfection. The role-playing served its purpose of relaxing her enough to take the next step, which was to sit in the hypnotherapy chair and do some gentle hypnosis work, focusing on getting her to "change her channel," an analogy that she understood immediately. A very quick study, she simply slipped away from the anxiety she had been feeling and into a hypnotic state. I then began giving her suggestions designed to modify her behavior even further. These included positive affirmations meant to boost her confidence, as well as calming suggestions that would lower her anxiety.

Feedback wasn't long in coming. Her principal was almost ecstatic at the visible improvements Vivian displayed at school: she had stopped vomiting almost entirely, and had given the school no reason to send her home again. There was, however, still much to be done, so more chair work was needed to get the root of the problem.

Two things helped immensely. The first was time: as with adults, children need to become more comfortable with the process of being hypnotized. The second was a little bit of informal art therapy. This involved encouraging her to draw pictures, write notes and do some coloring—all things children typically like to do, but which she hadn't yet cottoned on to. She did now. Drawing is a simple method of opening up the subconscious, and it's particularly useful for a young mind searching for ways to articulate

thoughts and feelings. Thanks to these two approaches, she began opening up in the chair. During one hypnosis session, she blurted out something that held the key to understanding her ongoing anxiety issues: she remembered the incidents that had triggered her problem in the first place. She revealed that she had become extremely upset because her father sometimes forgot to pick her up after school, and as a consequence, she had been forced to wait, alone, for a subsequent ride to arrive—and sometimes she had to wait for a substantial period of time. That's what had caused her terrible inner storms. She hadn't told anyone about this earlier for two reasons: she hadn't known how to express herself well, and she had been greatly afraid of sparking a family dispute. I knew the moment she told me that this was her *aha* moment, and the accuracy of my intuition was confirmed by a rapid change in her behavior: she quickly turned into the kind of happy-go-lucky child every parent wants to have. At the end of her last session, I gave her a little gift to mark the occasion: a framed graduation certificate, complete with a picture of her wearing one of my hats.

Her smile in that photo is priceless.

While Vivian's case didn't necessitate past-life hypnosis, it's still worth noting as an example of how powerful the mind can be when it comes to controlling—and counteracting—physical ailments, particularly those caused by anxiety and early-childhood trauma. Through the type of regression Vivian experienced, she was able to remember feeling abandoned by her father, and once she had, the powerful psychological effect of the incidents in question was effectively neutralized, allowing her to hit the reset button on her behavior. As hard as this news may be for parents, children tend to amplify the importance of such incidents far more than is generally realized, and the result can sometimes be lingering trauma that lasts a lifetime if it's not dealt with.

Another case involving a child *did* require past-life regression. A very shy boy by the name of Curtis came to me suffering from bed-wetting, accompanied by painful stomachaches. His problems had no apparent cause: he came from a good, stable family; he excelled at school; and, though shy, happily participated in extracurricular activities. There was no

evidence of bullying. There were no signs of abuse. Nevertheless, Curtis regularly wet the bed, suffering dreadful embarrassment as a result. Multiple visits to a psychologist and a medical doctor, along with the usual battery of tests, yielded nothing by way of an explanation, so his parents decided to try hypnosis. Time was of the essence, as Curtis had been invited to a sleep-over at a friend's house—a huge social event on any kid's calendar. The bed-wetting needed to end, and we only had a few weeks to stop it.

With the help of my secret weapon (chocolate chip cookies), Curtis quickly overcame his initial shyness and became quite adept at hypnosis. Through the course of only a few sessions, multiple memories began surfacing that had great bearing on his situation. The first to pop up was a memory from his current lifetime: he remembered overhearing a conversation that had occurred late one night after his parents thought he was asleep. The conversation had taken place during a visit from his grandparents, who had come from Europe to see the family. The main topic of the dialogue that evening concerned how quickly children grew up in the modern world. Curtis remembered, in particular, how his grandfather lamented this fact, saying in a stern voice just how terrible it was that children lost their innocence so quickly. The words obviously had a huge impact on the boy: amplifying what he had heard in the way that children often do, he was left with the fear that he was growing up too fast, and that his life was out of control. In fact, when speaking to me, he compared his life to tumbling down a steep staircase! Once this had come out, it gave us something tangible to focus on during our hypnosis sessions. I used post-hypnotic suggestion to help dissolve the lingering effects of this incident, which helped reduce his overall anxiety. It did not, however, stop the bed-wetting.

Realizing we needed to delve a bit deeper into his subconscious, we focused our next session on deep trance work. What emerged next was another set of memories, but they clearly did not originate in his current lifetime. During trance, Curtis told me he was looking at a vivid image of his father—but not his *current* father. The man he saw was like his current

father's evil twin: Curtis informed me that this other dad would regularly beat Curtis's mom, something that happened right in front of Curtis many times. He also gave me a vivid and detailed description of this previous life: he had been an only child; he had had no one to talk to; the family was so poor that they couldn't afford to give him shoes; he was always afraid of being beaten. The picture he painted was utterly different from the one he painted of his current life, except for one thing, and that was his feeling of complete powerlessness, which was identical in both lives. In the previous lifetime, he had been at the mercy of a violent parental figure; in his current lifetime, he was at the mercy of the *feeling* of powerlessness itself. This was, in fact, an echo we were dealing with. As traumas sometimes do, it had attached itself to his very psyche and carried over to a new life. The fact that this new life had almost nothing in common with the old one was irrelevant. The energy of powerlessness had hitched a ride from one lifetime to another, much like an insect does when it lands on a hiker's clothing and isn't discovered until later, when the hiker returns home. Good regression work allows us to brush off such "energy hitchhikers," allowing us to live our lives without interference from the past. And this was the case with Curtis. Once he had accessed memories from this previous life while sitting in the safety of my chair, his own life dramatically improved. A week after our final session, I received a thank you card from his mother: in it was a note informing me that he had enjoyed a highly successful sleepover with his friends! There's nothing that says *happy childhood* quite like a fun-filled pajama party: I can tell you, such memories can *also* stick around for multiple lifetimes.

About six months later, Curtis called me out of the blue. It was such a surprise that for a split second, my heart skipped a beat. But there was no need for concern. He was just phoning to say thanks. He was now truly out of the woods: no more tummy aches, no more bed-wetting, no more anxiety about growing up too fast and falling down steep staircases. "Oh," he added. "Just one more thing. Thanks for being my secret weapon!"

"Curtis," I replied, "I'm not your secret weapon. You're your own secret weapon. Don't ever forget that."

And with that, we bid each other a fond goodbye.

Conclusion

If we've demonstrated anything on the preceding pages, it's that our civilization must set aside the very real prejudices, taboos and stigmas that have hamstrung psi research, particularly in the West. We also need to become more accepting of intuitive healers, as well as the role intuition plays in our daily lives. If we wait for our scientific elites to give us their blessing before we do this, we'll be waiting a long time—and much could be lost during the interval. Elites throughout history have always fought against any perceived threat to their power. Can humanity afford to stand by while this old-fashioned cold war against psi continues, thereby ignoring the insight and advantage such "forbidden powers" can provide? Already we're seeing major institutions and organizations answer this question in their own way by quietly utilizing psi-related skills such as dowsing and remote viewing, with profound and highly practical results. Imagine what would happen if we, as a civilization, were to actually *embrace* psi, rather than secretly employ it or actively discourage it, which constitute the two primary responses to its existence?

The consequences could be far-reaching.

This is because the evidence for psi is substantial and compelling. Nevertheless, mainstream science officially pooh-poohs the idea of telepathy and other psi-related activity, and finds itself shunning, censuring or dismissing scientists who consider them valid research areas. It doesn't seem to matter—to the naysayers, at least—that the scientists in question are among the greatest minds human civilization has ever produced. Cambridge-educated biochemists like Rupert Sheldrake, Nobel Prize winners like Albert Einstein and Brian Josephson, and cutting-edge physicists like Russell Targ or Amit Goswami have all spoken up and urged us to look more closely at psi phenomena, but the response from the academic community as a whole has been to choke off funding and blacken reputations. It is enough to boggle the mind. What should be considered one

of the most important research areas left to investigate is considered off-limits by most academic authorities, or, at best, relegated to the fringe. It is more than a little ironic that this knee-jerk reaction is not so very different from the knee-jerk reaction of the Christian church to the witches, herbalists and healers of the Middle Ages. At bottom, both Science and the Church are guilty of doing what all powerful groups have done from the beginning of time, and that's protect their turf from a perceived threat. In the case of the Church, the threat was simple: if individuals can go see Heaven for themselves (as Swedenborg contended and those who have had NDEs believe), why bother to have priests? In the case of today's academic power brokers, the reaction is more nuanced, as it is the result of cultural bias and the materialist paradigm, both of which, despite suffering some wear and tear from the emergence of the Quantum Age and the post-colonial era, are still very much alive and kicking. Although mainstream science is *slowly* beginning to push its own boundaries somewhat by recognizing the benefits of hypnosis, dowsing, acupuncture and similar practices, we believe a much more major paradigm shift is necessary if humanity is ever to realize its full potential. Fortunately, none of us have to wait for permission from the scientific community to investigate our own inner landscapes—or to develop whatever hidden potential our minds contain.

Viewed cumulatively, the evidence for psi activity should make us rethink our basic understanding of human abilities, as well as our place in the universe. Psi powers, though "forbidden" by religious and academic authorities throughout history, not only exist, but can and should be vigorously pursued by scientists and non-scientists alike, as they could hold the key to the future survival of the human species. Buttressing this idea is the fact that there is some evidence to suggest that psi played a role in the development of major inventions. In fact, distinguished scientists such as Charles Townes—a central figure in the development of the laser, one of the most important technologies ever—have emphasized the role intuitive insight plays in the discovery process. To them, intuitive breakthroughs are as crucial as other methods in solving the challenges facing humankind. Those who struggle to comprehend this fact should remind themselves that

our greatest scientists were all mystics to one degree or another, and mystical insight played a part in many of our most important scientific breakthroughs.

We should also remember the perspectives adopted by scientists such as Einstein, Ramanujan, Heisenberg, Gödel and others. They all had a strong sense of spirituality and believed that religion played an important role. Although they differed on the precise nature of that role, they would have thought it absurd to believe, as some do, that science is "necessarily" atheistic. Given our knowledge of how psi operates, it's clear that not only do we have to re-evaluate our potential capabilities as human beings, but we must also re-evaluate how the worlds religions came into being in the first place. Could it be, as some suggest, that psi abilities were the spark that brought them into existence? Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism are filled with stories about miracles, higher planes of existence and communication with otherworldly beings. Could these actually be accounts of psi activity told in a symbolic language appropriate for the time?

As we saw earlier, Socrates, a thinker who is revered even today for the sharpness of his intellect, stood on the border between an age of intuition and our own age of rationality; he was a type of hybrid figure who straddled the border between an ancient, more intuitive landscape and the overly analytical age in which we find ourselves. Almost all commentators believe that our era is a vast improvement over his, and that all his talk of Gods, souls and his *daemon* are nothing more than poetic references to a past that has rightfully been extinguished. *But are we really so sure its extinguishment was a good thing?* Or is it possible that the turn toward our own left-brain civilization was the *wrong* turn—and that dependence on just one narrow type of thinking represents an imbalance that cries out for correction?

In other words, did human civilization get it wrong?

Obviously such questions cannot be answered easily, but at least they can be *asked*. Our civilization has done such a spectacular job of wiping out the past (and rewriting history in a way that makes the modern world always

come out looking vastly superior) that it's hard to fairly evaluate the belief systems and technologies possessed by ancient civilization. We *think* we are superior. Are we really? Are we happier? More fulfilled? Do we understand our place in the cosmos as poignantly as Socrates and his fellow Athenians did? And was his civilization truly so primitive? Were ancient peoples, in general, easy prey for "superstitious twaddle," as we believe? Count us among the skeptics when it comes to such claims. If you are so convinced that the ancients were inferior to us as human beings, read the Socratic dialogues—or any number of other ancient works. If you do, you will find examples of such soaring intellect and well-rounded humanity that you would be hard-pressed to find a match in today's world. Certainly we have more toys than the ancients; we can zoom around aimlessly in cars and planes and trains. But are we more insightful, more human, more multi-dimensional, more *aware* of the inner truths and hidden aspects of our being? When the bells and baubles of our out-of-control consumer age are stripped away, it's hard to say which era is capable of providing a more meaningful existence. One thing, however, *is* certain: the past is not quite the primitive swamp full of superstitious, club-wielding barbarians that we sometimes like to believe.

Still, as we have already said, most of the past's secrets will remain just that: secrets that will stay hidden until the end of time. The past is the past, after all. It's not likely to walk through our door any time soon with answers to our questions. Nonetheless, we suspect that at least *some* of the answers can be found in the traditional knowledge that has survived to this day. Ancient traditions and practices, many of them religious in origin, should be considered treasure troves as far as the understanding of psi is concerned. It was a "chance" encounter with a swami that led to the biofeedback movement, which has now entered the mainstream, as have such esoteric practices as acupuncture, tai chi and Reiki. Research into the abilities demonstrated by practitioners of Chinese martial arts has shown great promise; the effectiveness of dowsing has been scientifically demonstrated; and hypnosis has repeatedly been used to uncover forgotten memories, provide medical remedies for chronic ailments, and even hone high-level

physical skills. All these things should tell us at least one thing: that far from being primitive savages, our ancestors possessed a great deal of knowledge and technical expertise that we would do well to treasure and explore. Far from dismissing ancient practices such as yoga, chi gong, Reiki, dowsing, acupuncture and the intuitive arts, we should deepen our understanding of them. After all, they may take us down paths we might never have discovered otherwise. But to do so—to blaze a trail down those mysterious, future pathways—it is absolutely essential that we first do one crucial thing.

We must free our minds.

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Alexander Voltaire is the *nom de guerre* of a writer who has spent decades researching the complex interrelationships between mysticism, rationality, power and knowledge. A committed bon vivant and all-round troublemaker with advanced degrees in philosophy and political science, he has been observed standing on soapboxes and shouting into the wind at multiple locations worldwide.

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